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Interview: Vidit Gujrathi
India's rising star

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Opening Surprise
2...h5 against the English

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Great games with great comments
Anand, Giri, Kramnik, Mamedyarov, Karjakin and many more

Magnus Carlsen
Record 6th win in Wijk aan Zee

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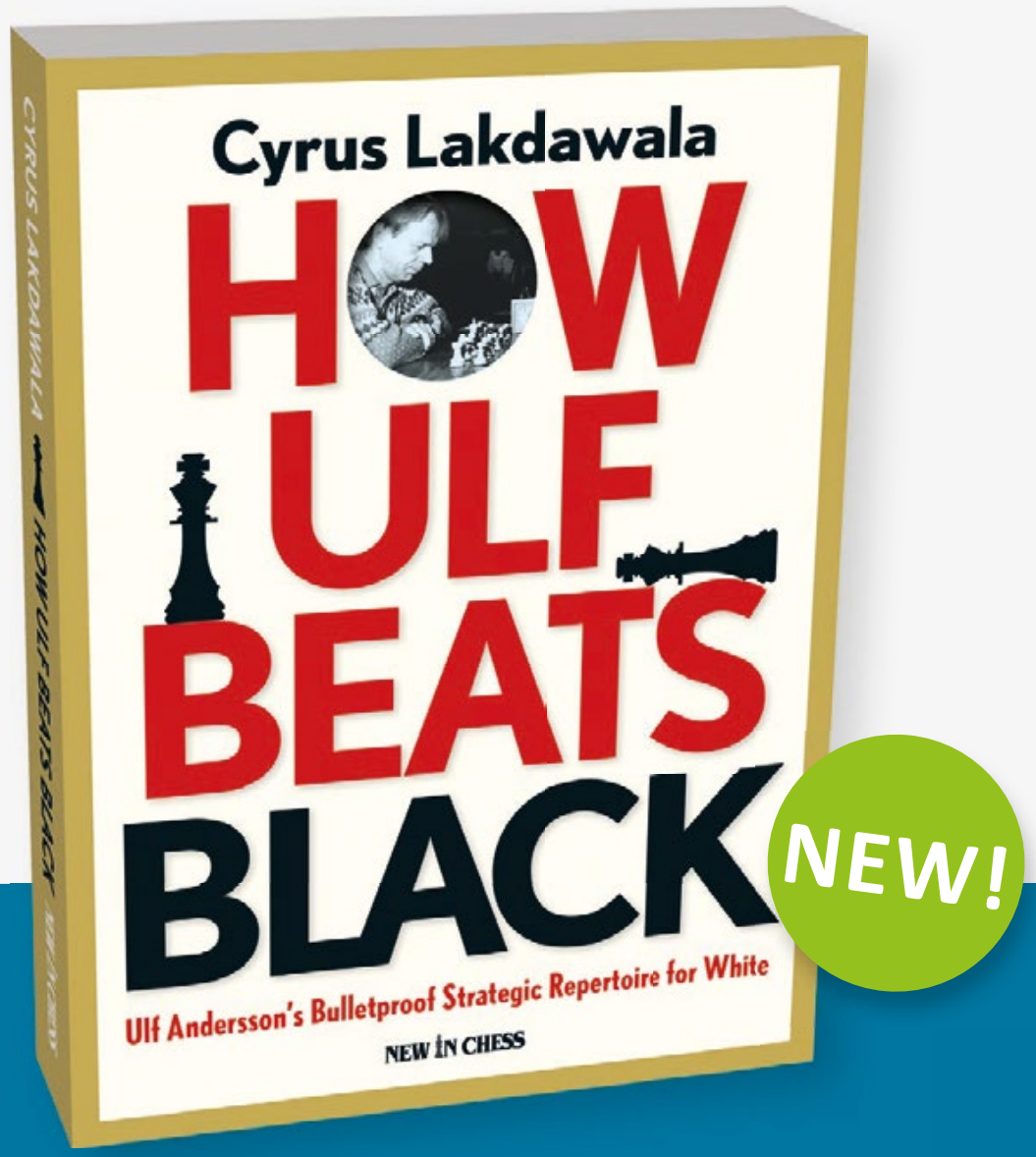

Legendary Swedish GM Ulf Andersson almost never lost a game and kept scoring wins from quiet positions. Quiet positons? Acclaimed chess author Cyrus Lakdawala has played Andersson's openings for decades and explains that those positions only LOOK quiet. Andersson's opponents usually thought they had nothing to fear, until it was too late.

How Ulf Beats Black is much more than just a chess opening manual. Lakdawala's lucid explanations offer a practical guide to positional technique that will improve your endgame skills as well. On top of that it is also a games collection of a great but often misunderstood chess player.

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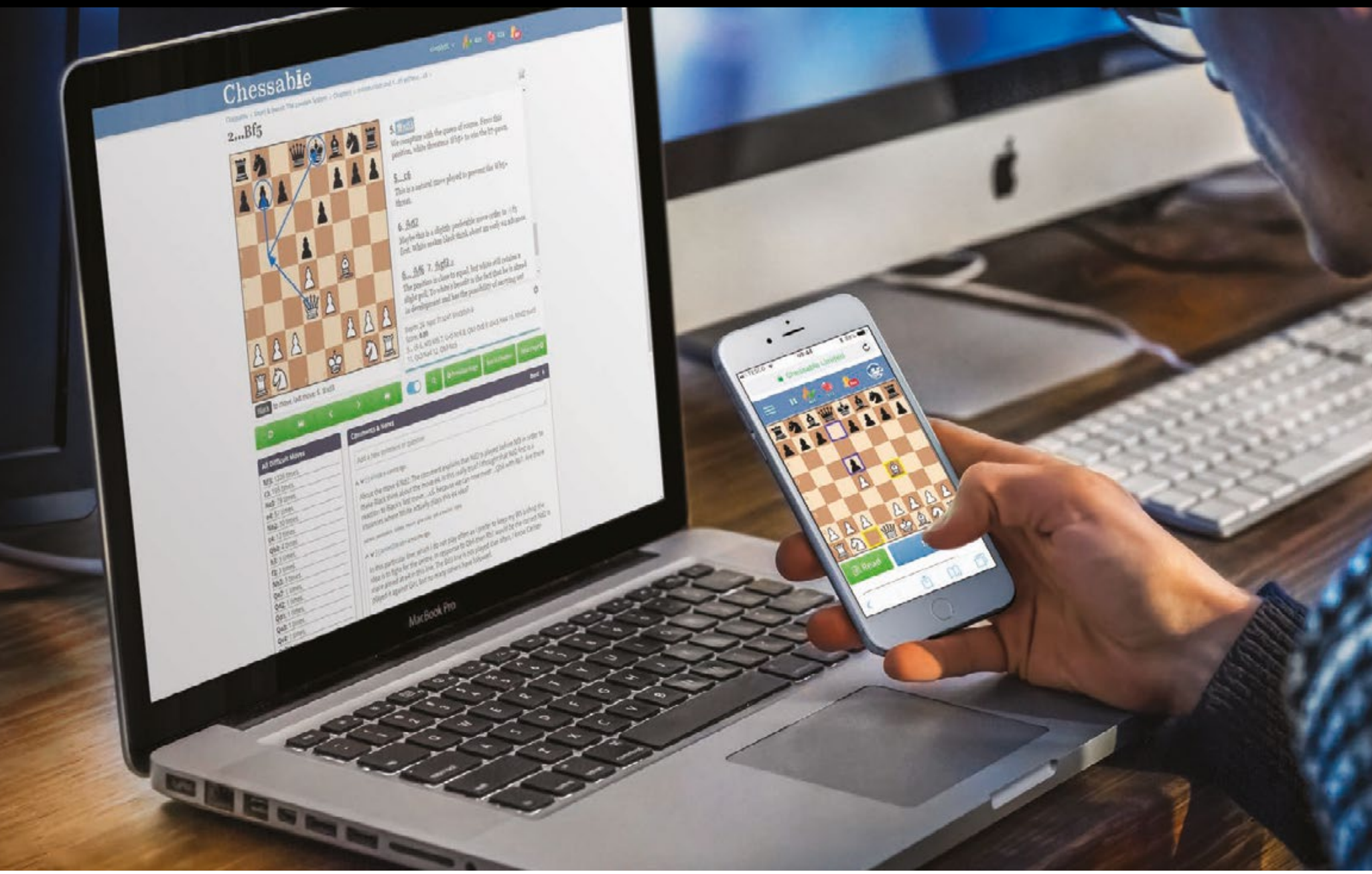

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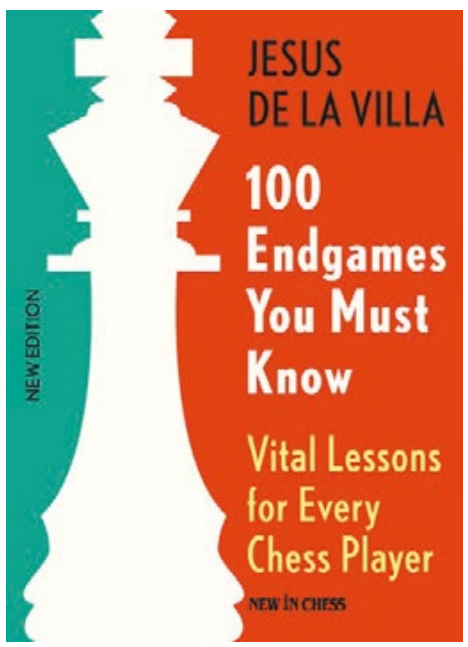

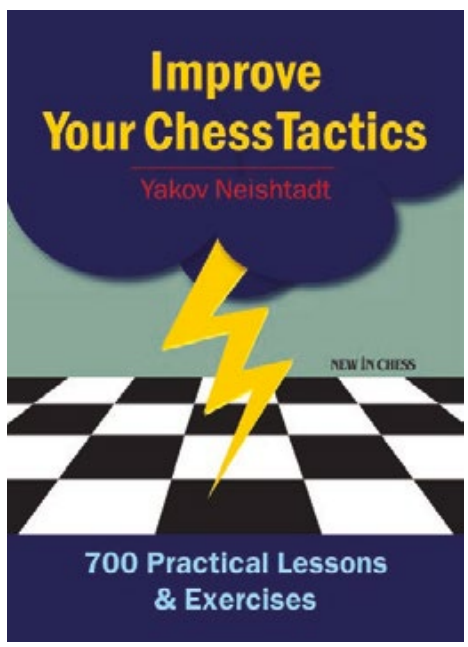

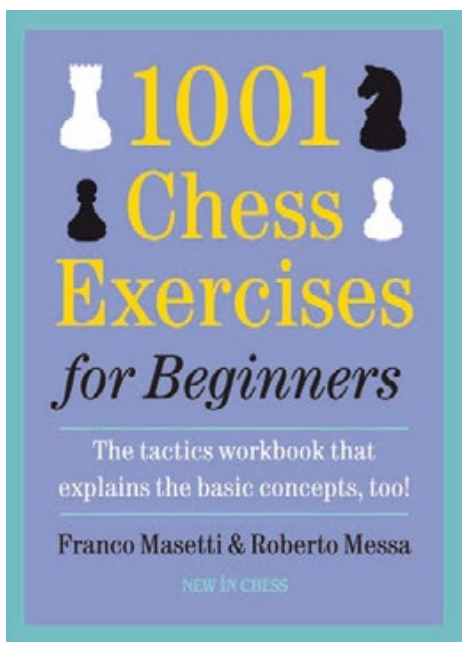

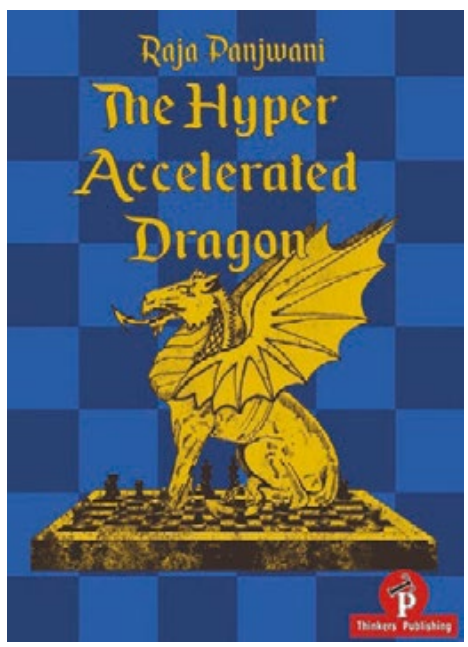

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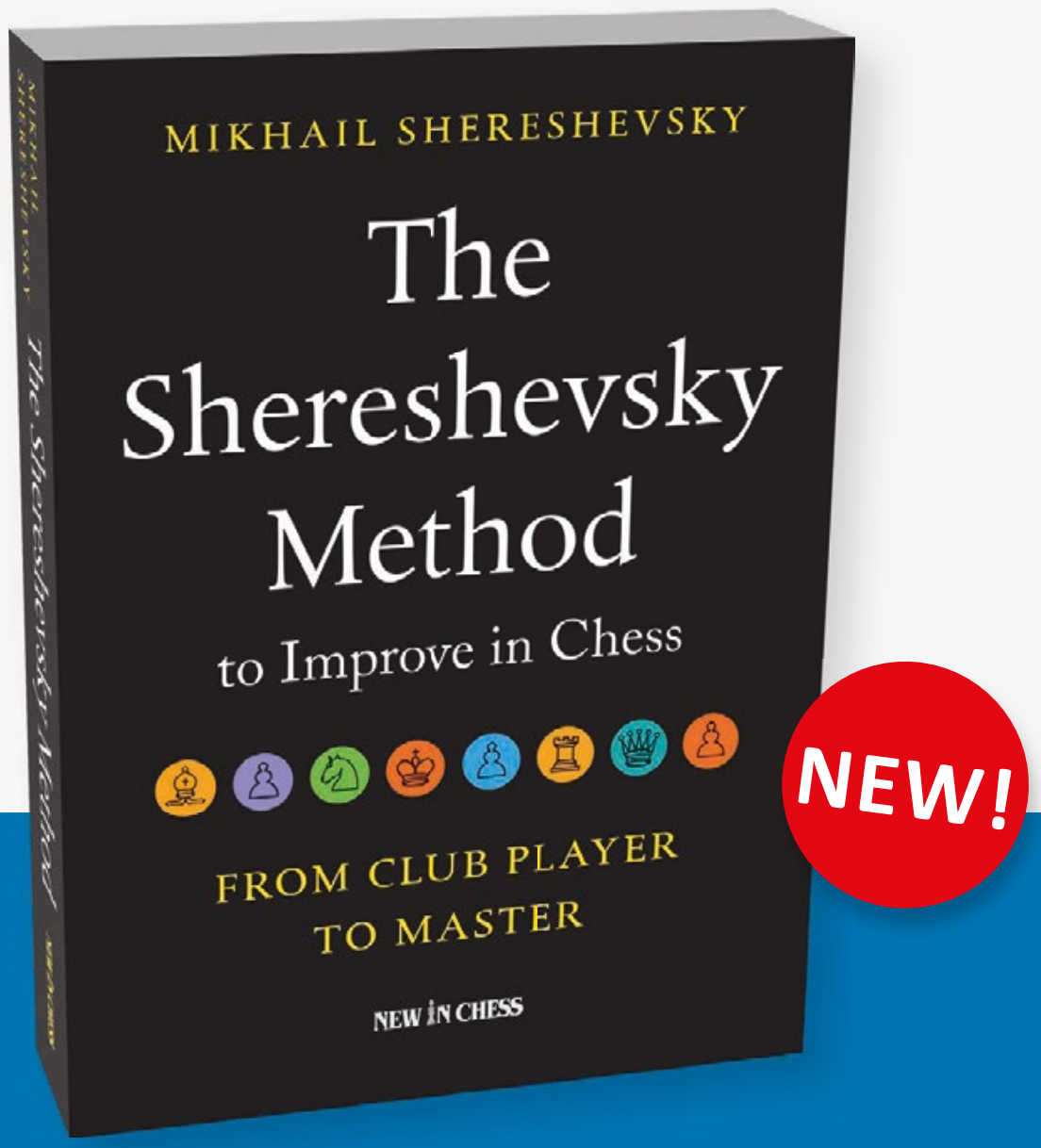
“New In Chess scored a bit of a coup getting this book.”

Mark Crowther, editor *The Week In Chess*



In 2014 the Russian Chess Federation started a wide-ranging campaign aimed at the revival of chess in Russia. One of the first actions that were taken was commissioning legendary Belarussian chess coach Mikhail Shereshevsky to recapitulate and condense his famous training methods.

In doing so Shereshevsky has created a totally reworked compendium of his acclaimed classics *Endgame Strategy* and *The Soviet Chess Conveyor*, with many improvements, new examples and exercises. Furthermore, he has added a new and highly effective approach on how to calculate variations.

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE
Vishy Anand, Jeroen Bosch, Pia Cramling, Maxim Dlugy, Anish Giri, Nils Grandelius, Vidit Gujrathi, John Henderson, Sergey Karjakin, Vladimir Kramnik, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Dylan McClain, Ashot Nadanian, Peter Heine Nielsen, Maxim Notkin, Arthur van de Oudeweetering, Judit Polgar, Gary Quillan, Richard Rapport, Hans Ree, Matthew Sadler, V. Saravanan, Nigel Short, Jan Timman, Simon Williams

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Desert Island

With its instantly recognizable signature tune of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* – Britain's oldest radio programme – has been broadcasting since 1942. In that time, more than 3,000 guests have shared which eight recordings, book and luxury item they would take with them if they were ever 'castaway' on the eponymous desert island.

Amongst those to have shared their passions are a diverse mix of figures including Sir David Attenborough, Louis Armstrong, Neil Armstrong, Tracy Emin and Bill Gates. And recently, now the first chess grandmaster.

On 28 January, host Kirsty Young's castaway was Garry Kasparov, who reminisced on his early Soviet chess-playing days, music, movies, theatre and, naturally, Vladimir Putin. His eight musical picks were:

- Frank Sinatra, Strangers in the Night
- Mozart, Symphony No. 40, KV 550 in G Minor
- Chopin, Etude, Op.10 – No. 12 in C minor
- Lloyd Webber, Overture to Phantom of the Opera
- Vladimir Vysotsky, Koni priveredlivye
- Bizet's Prélude to Carmen
- Nino Rota, The Godfather Waltz
- Ennio Morricone, Chai Mai.

Kasparov's book choice was *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov and his 'luxury' item a telescope. You can still listen online at the BBC iPlayer to Garry Kasparov on *Desert Island Discs*, where it is also available to download as a podcast.

AMANDA BENSON BBC

NIC's Café

Folding Tigrans

The Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) announced a series of new bank notes, all of them bearing images of noted Armenians, that will go into circulation in the autumn to mark the 25th anniversary of the introduction of the Armenian national currency. But the new 2,000-dram bill is expected to be introduced much earlier, because according to the CBA, there's currently a big demand for it on the market – and that new 2,000-dram

The new Armenian 2,000-dram bill honours the legacy of World Champion Tigran Petrosian (1929-1984).

bill will be the one that honours the ninth World Chess Champion Tigran Petrosian (1929-1984).

There have been several coins – both official and limited-edition commemorative – released that have featured either a chess player or a major chess event, but only two chess players have ever been immortalized on a bank note. Petrosian is now set to join his Soviet-era team mate and rival, Paul Keres, who became the first chess player to appear on a bank note, on the Estonian five krooni in 1991.

Not only that, but Petrosian and Keres now also join a very select monetary club of two who have both appeared on a bank note and a coin. In 1999, Armenia released a 5,000-dram coin on the occasion of Petrosian's 70th birthday, and in 2016, Estonia's national bank issued 500,000 €2 coins to commemorate Keres' centenary year.

Honouring a hero

In Washington State in the Pacific Northwest, there was a heart-felt community effort to help a local Puyallup gold star family honour their son, Staff Sgt. Bryan Black, who was one of three US soldiers killed in an ambush in Niger last October. They launched a gofundme page on the crowdfunding platform to raise money to install two chess tables in Pioneer park as a lasting memorial to the chess-loving Green Beret medic.

Their goal was to raise $7,500 and they raised that amount in a little over two weeks. Their appeal also caught the attention of local philanthropist Erik Anderson, founder of First Move: America's Foundation for Chess – that aims to teach students creative and critical thinking skills through chess to help them succeed in life – and he doubled the community effort with an additional $7,500.

Anderson arranged to meet with Karen Black, Bryan's mother, Phil Watson, his long-time friend, and City Council members Tom Swanson and Robin Farris at Puyallup City Hall to hand over the cheque in person. He also handed over to the family two chessboards, signed by Magnus Carlsen, who is also the honorary

Erik Anderson with the mother and friends of fallen soldier Bryan Black.

chairman of America's Foundation for Chess.

'It seemed a very worthwhile thing to do, to honour the service of that family and their loss', Anderson said. 'It's their dream and vision [that] there is a permanent place for children and families and all people to enjoy a game they love and he loved.'

So now, with Anderson's donation, the family will have more to spend on the memorial for Bryan's legacy – whether that be to hold a chess tournament or adding a third child-sized chess table to the memorial.

Leaving on a Jet Plane

While we've always come to associate the Aeroflot Open in Moscow with flying in grandmasters for their annual extravaganza, now the Russian national airline has gone one better by allowing us to 'fly in a grandmaster', with the news that the

Aeroflot added a new Boeing 737-800 named after Mikhail Botvinnik to their fleet.

latest addition to their fleet honours the sixth World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik.

Boeing 737-800 (VP-BKK) went into active service on January 4, and pride of place on the side of the jet bears the name 'M. Botvinnik', in tribute to the Soviet Patriarch and three-time World Champion. This was one of two new Aeroflot jets to pay tribute to the arts, the other being Boeing 737-800 (VP-BKN), named after Bulat Okudzhava, the Russian poet, writer, and folksinger.

Bank on it

You can always bank on FIDE to make the news headlines for all the very wrong reasons. The latest little nugget to go viral was an open

letter, posted on the FIDE website by FIDE treasurer Prof. Dr. Adrian M. Siegel, that raised serious concerns about the governing body's bank account... or, to be more precise, its

NEW IN CHESS

The US Treasury sanctions list is a headache for Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and FIDE.

possible lack of a bank account going into the future.

Siegel says that the Swiss division of UBS bank has strongly indicated to him that it will close the FIDE bank account, in April at the latest, and all because president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's name still remains active on the sanctions list of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. He has been on the list since November 2015, with claims of him being part of a networking group 'providing support to the government of Syria, including for facilitating Syrian government oil purchases from ISIL'.

And with the tightening of the money laundering and tax evasion strategy in Switzerland, Siegel warns that this prohibits banks from doing business with institutions or persons on the sanctions list. He ends his letter with: 'In summary, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's problems severely damage FIDE's business activities and we have to look for a new bank connection. In the process of this change we anticipate some problems. However, we will do our best that payments will not be delayed.'

The FIDE president has always denied having any ties with the Syrian government and has stated several times that he was confident he would 'soon' be removed from the list – but after two years, it doggedly still remains there. His London solicitor, Nigel Kushner, responded to Reuters that: 'Mr. Ilyumzhinov believes that the allegations form part of an ongoing smear campaign related to a power struggle at FIDE in advance of elections taking place this year.'

From NFL to NM

Last July, the Baltimore Ravens offensive linesman John Urschel hit the headlines by shocking NFL pundits and fans with his announcement that he was retiring early from the game after only three seasons at the club. It had nothing to do with a career-ending injury for the 26-year-old, instead he simply wanted to take his life in a different direction.

Forgoing a lucrative career as a professional footballer in a multi-million dollar industry, the intelligent and thoughtful gentle giant of a man decided he wanted to go back to school. But not any old school: he'd been accepted as a doctoral candidate in mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

And not content with his noted specialities of discrete Schrödinger operators, high dimensional data compression, algebraic multi-grid and Voronoi diagrams, Urschel – who is also a massive chess fan (see Celeb 64, NIC 2016/8) – revealed

NEW IN CHESS

Former football pro John Urschel wants to take his chess to a next level.

in a *Huffington Post* interview that he now has a new challenge: he wants to become a chess master. He's set himself the goal of becoming a National Master; a title awarded by the US Chess Federation to players who achieve a USCF rating of 2200. Currently, Urschel has a USCF rating of 1600, and he believes that becoming an NM by the end of 2020 is very doable.

London & Brexit

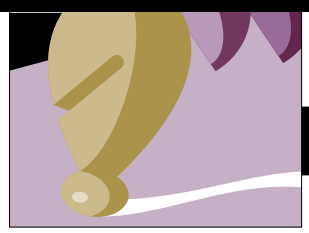
There's naturally great uncertainty in the UK over what will happen after they leave the European Union. There's lots of conflicting advice on the matter, but one puzzling media story that

NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen: an unexpected trump for die-hard Brexiteers?

caught our attention about this prickly dilemma went under the heading of 'The answer to success after Brexit? Taking up chess.'

The opinion piece appeared in *City A.M.*, a free, business-focused newspaper distributed in and around London, and it was penned by Ilya Merenzon, head honcho over at World Chess (formerly known as Agon), the commercial rights holder and promoter of the World Chess Championship. Dazzling us with a smorgasbord of unverified polling data and equally unverified medical research, he claims that, with Magnus Carlsen set to defend his title later this year in London, chess could well be the panacea the UK is seeking after it exits the EU. ■

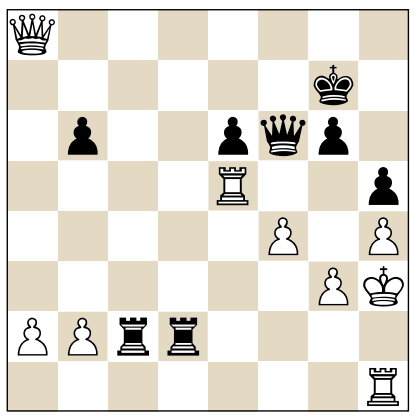


Your Move

Illegal moves in blitz

In his inspiring article 'The King of Blitz' in New In Chess 2018/1, Maxim Dlugy criticizes the new FIDE blitz rule concerning illegal moves – and rightly so, in my view. However, a 'game' such as 1.e4 d5 2.♗b5+ h5?? 3.♕xh5!, mentioned by Dlugy, does not exemplify the main problem with the new rule, I believe. After all, here the player offended by an illegal move simply has a choice between two different ways of penalizing the offender. This is not necessarily a bad idea; something similar is amiss in snooker, for example.

I think the main problem with the new rule is that it 'allows' a player in a critical position to gain crucial time for thinking, notably in blitz. Consider the following example:



(Gelfand-Artemiev 2017, puzzle No. 2 in the 'Maximize Your Tactics' column in the 2018/1 issue of your magazine)

It is Black's move. Imagine he feels there must be a win, but he just doesn't see it. And also imagine he is in time trouble – his clock is ticking away: 30 seconds, 20, 10. Then, for the first time in this game, Black makes an illegal move: 1...♕f6-g4 mate!

With the old rule, White would now have claimed the illegal move and won the game immediately (in blitz). With the new rule, he has no choice but to stop the clock and call the arbiter. The arbiter has to go to the board, examine the situation, and add a minute to White's time – not always an easy task with digital clocks. The whole procedure might easily take two or three minutes for it to be completed. Meanwhile, Black eventually does find the winning idea. His queen is put back on f6, his clock is started, and now Black forces mate with 1...♕f6xf4!. The result: the one offended (White) is offended twice, and the offender (Black) is not penalized at all ...

Klaus Eckler
Krefeld, Germany

How AlphaZero cheated

I just received New In Chess 2018/1, as usual a great treat! I have a few comments about GM Kaufman's article on AlphaZero which I read with great interest. However, it doesn't address the main problems in this uneven match. I am a FIDE Master, but more importantly, a Correspondence Chess Grandmaster. Right now I rank 14th in the ICCF rating list. Moreover, I am very familiar with most current chess engines and their methods of analysis such as Monte Carlo and IDeA (interactive deep analysis). I still use the latter, even though the majority of ICCF grandmasters do not.

I believe that the AlphaZero team cheated (knowingly or unknowingly) in this match.

Monte Carlo was first used by Vas Rajlich for his Rybka programs 10-11 years ago. Deep Rybka 4 still supports Monte Carlo, but none of the newer engines support this function. (IDeA also had a similar function, but it was not widely used.)

I have 10 computers running for my correspondence chess games with varying levels of processing power; some weak, requiring more time, some strong. And I analyse the same positions with IDeA, Monte Carlo, and Shredder triple brain simultaneously.

Now about the AlphaZero-Stockfish match:

1) Contrary to what is told, AlphaZero had a huge opening database (that is basically what Monte Carlo analysis is). It actually did not learn how to play the game in the beginning, it played millions of games and made a huge opening database (this is what they call 'how it learned chess') by playing games against itself (that is how it learned to play go as well, with a giant Monte Carlo database).

2) The fixed time control: this was another huge handicap for Stockfish, especially considering the lack of an opening database: 1 min/move (not 40 min for 40 moves). This is a huge problem when one engine has a huge opening database (made with Monte Carlo before the match) and the other one does not. Significant opening analysis cannot be refuted in 1 minute.

If you give me an opening book and Stockfish and I play against another Stockfish with no book, and 1 minute each, I would have a significant advantage.

3) GM Kaufman estimates a handicap for Stockfish of almost 100 points, but I think it is around 400-600 points.

In my opinion, AlphaZero cannot win a 10-game match against a strong ICCF grandmaster if the latter is using currently available engines and techniques.

Tansel Turgut,
Ann Harbor, MI, USA

Danish Champion

First of all: thank you for your wonderful magazine, which I have subscribed to for some decades and read even longer. I can easily and eagerly applaud all its contents, but since I am quite interested in chess history I have particularly enjoyed your splendid articles on that subject.

Write to us

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Letters may be edited or abridged

Now to my small correction. New In Chess 2018/1 has just arrived, and as I started to scroll through the pages I noticed the theme of page 14, 'The kings of their countries'.

In the graphic I missed my countryman Erik Andersen (1904-38), who won the Danish Championship no fewer than 12 times: 1923, 1925-1927, 1929-1936. For 13 years and more he was the dominant Danish player. He once nearly beat Alekhine in his heyday and although his international performances were scarce, he played six times in the Olympiad during that period, winning silver with the Danish team in 1927. Sadly, he died very young from a terminal disease (probably a brain tumour).

Sven Bjerkhof
Copenhagen, Denmark

Editorial postscript:
Thank you very much. The same omission was pointed out by your countryman Jens Hartung-Nielsen.

Icelandic Champion

As I was flicking through the digital version of New In Chess 2018/1, I spotted on page 14 the infographic entitled 'The kings of their countries'. There Hannes Stefánsson is mentioned and it is said that he has been national champion of Iceland 11 times. I think it's 12 times, you are missing his title in 2010.

Aðalsteinn Thorarensen
Reykjavik, Iceland

Injustice?

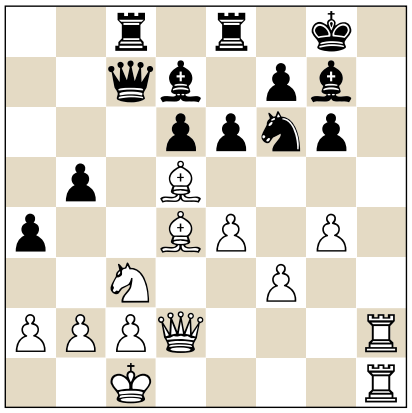
With great pleasure I have read the article 'Back at the board' by Parimarjan Negi in New In Chess 2018/1.

As, after 16 years, I was back at the board a few days ago in the 23rd Hit Open in Nova Gorica (Slovenia), I wanted to share what happened to me.

From a technical point of view, I share all the things described by Mr. Negi, and autonomously, I applied all his precepts: before the tournament I trained by solving some tactical positions (Maxim Notkin's naturally), playing some blitz games online and playing through some recent games. During the tournament I looked at my opponents' repertoire (not to surprise them with a novelty, but just to have an idea of what to expect), started the tournament with a positional approach trying to assess correctly the positions and only in the end started taking some risks, with this as my best effort:

Giorgio Rigatti–Dominik Kaluza
Nova Gorica Open B 2018

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♗c4 ♘c6 9.♕d2 a6 10.♗b3 ♖e8 11.0-0-0 ♗d7 12.g4 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 b5 N
13...♗e6 14.♘d5 ♘xd5 15.exd5 ♗d7 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.h4 f6 18.c3 b5 19.♗c2 ♕b6 20.♕d3 f5 21.h5 ♖f8 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♖d2 ♖h8 24.♖g1 ♖ad8 25.gxf5 1-0, Dydy-Knobling, Naumburg 2002.
14.h4 a5 15.h5 a4 16.♗d5 ♖c8 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.♖h2!?
18.g5!? ♘h5 19.♖xh5!.
18...♕c7 19.♖dh1!? e6??
19...e5□ 20.g5 ♘h5 21.♗e3∞.



20.♖h8+!! ♗xh8 21.♖xh8+ ♔xh8 22.♕h6+ ♔g8 23.♗xf6 1-0

What made me angry, and the reason for this letter, was the decision of the referees not to admit me in the A-tournament. I'm a CM with a national Elo of 2035. In my last tournament (Nova Gorica 2002, where I won the first prize in the U2000 section) I had an Elo performance of over 2200, but I never got a FIDE Elo because I had only 8 rated adversaries. This year I won with 9/9 with a performance of 2178, but I will get, if I have calculated correctly, a starting Elo of 1538. Something must be changed in the FIDE handbook, as we, untitled players, are more than 95% of FIDE! Gens una sumus!

Giorgio Rigatti
Udine, Italy

Missing moves

I enjoyed Jan Timman's article 'Place your bets for Berlin' in New In Chess 2018/1. Yet I would like to point out one mistake I found in it. In the game Anand-So the side-line 28.♘xb6! cxb6 29.♕xc3 ♕e2+ 30.♔g1 ♕e4! 31.♘e3 ♘e2+ 32.♔f1 ♘d4 doesn't look logical because the queen is hanging, and after 32.♔f1 Black can simply capture it with 32...♘xc3.

I guess that the inclusion of the moves 31.♕c8+ ♔h7 makes more sense, and then the offered continuation 32.♘e3 ♘e2+ 33.♔f1 ♘d4 leads to an edge for Black, as mentioned in the article.

Iva Videnova
Plovdiv, Bulgaria

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PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland
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HONORARY EDITOR: Jan Timman
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ART-DIRECTION: Jan Scholtus
PRODUCTION: Joop de Groot
TRANSLATORS: Ken Neat, Piet Verhagen
SALES AND ADVERTISING: Remmelt Otten

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS ISSUE:
Alina l'Ami, Amanda Benson, Maria Emelianova, Berend Vonk, Lennart Ootes, John Saunders, Sophie Triay
COVER PHOTO: Alina l'Ami

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Fischer Facts

March 9, 2018, is the 75th anniversary of the birth of Bobby Fischer, the 11th World Champion. Though his reign as champion was brief, he is considered among the greatest players of all time and he left an indelible mark on the game. On this page are some facts about his career. *DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN*

Fischer vs. ...

Not surprisingly, Fischer had a very good record against many of the best players of his era. But there were a few players against whom he struggled because he was bothered by their sharp and tactical playing styles.

WINS DRAWS LOSSES

FISCHER'S WINNING PERCENTAGE

Bent Larsen
9 1 2
79.2%

Pal Benko
8 7 3
63.9%

Vasily Smyslov
3 5 1
61.1%

Samuel Reshevsky
9 13 4
59.6%

Svetozar Gligoric
7 8 4
57.9%

Tigran Petrosian
8 15 4
57.4%

Boris Spassky
17 28 11
55.4%

Paul Keres
4 3 3
55.0%

Mikhail Tal
2 5 4
40.9%

Efim Geller
3 2 5
40.0%

Olympiads

Fischer played in four Olympiads for the United States, winning two individual silver and one individual bronze medal.

WINS DRAWS LOSSES

FISCHER'S WINNING PERCENTAGE

BRONZE

Leipzig 1960
10 6 2
72.2%

EIGHTH

Varna 1962
8 6 3
64.7%

SILVER

Havana 1966
14 2 1
88.2%

SILVER

Siegen 1970
8 4 1
76.9%

Largest rating edge

Fischer holds the record for the largest edge over the No. 2 player in the rankings since ratings began in 1970.

125 POINTS
July 1972
Fischer (2785)
over
Boris Spassky (2660)

82 POINTS
January 2000
Garry Kasparov (2851)
over
Vishy Anand (2769)

74 POINTS
October 2013
Magnus Carlsen (2870)
over
Vladimir Kramnik (2796)

Incredible winning streak

On his road to the title, Fischer won 20 consecutive victories, including 6-0 in two Candidates matches. It was the second longest streak in history.

Wilhelm Steinitz (1873-1882) — 25 WINS

Fischer (1970-1971) — 20 WINS

Remarkable simul score

In 1964, Fischer embarked on a simul tour of the United States and Canada. He played more than 40 simuls and 2000 games.

WINS 1850 DRAWS 105 LOSSES 67

94.1%

United States Championships

Fischer won every United States Championship that he played in, racking up an impressive score along the way, including his perfect score in 1963-64, a feat that has never been seen, before or since.

WINS DRAWS LOSSES

FISCHER'S WINNING PERCENTAGE

1957-1958
8 5 0
80.8%

1958-1959
6 5 0
77.2%

1959-1960
7 4 0
81.8%

1960-1961
7 4 0
81.8%

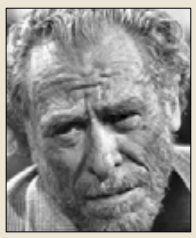
1962-1963
6 4 1
72.7%

1963-1964
11 0 0
100%

1965
8 1 2
77.2%

1966-1967
8 3 0
86.3%

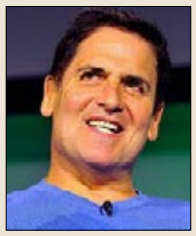
Fair & Square



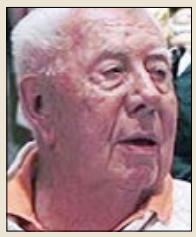
Charles Bukowski: 'I would certainly end up forever crying the blues into a coffee cup in a park for old men playing chess or silly games of some sort.'
(The chess-loving German-American poet, novelist, and short story writer, 1920-1994)

Ruth Byrne: 'The chess master is the chemist of a dimension that is geometrically bounded by 8x8. The elements he works with are Pawn Structure, Space, Force, and Time.'
(Professor of Cognitive Science at Trinity College Dublin in Ireland)

Sam Cunningham: 'They all jumped – why wouldn't they? It is what you do to defend free kicks. And Kevin De Bruyne, clearly working 10 moves ahead of everyone else like a master chess player, thought: why go high?'
(The inews football correspondent, on the quick-thinking of the Manchester City and Belgium midfielder, who outwitted the Cardiff City defenders by hitting his free kick under the jumping wall for his team's opening goal in their recent FA Cup match)



Mark Cuban: 'I love the competitive aspect of business. It's like playing chess. Why do people play chess? Knowing the realm of moves? Even when you get to be a chess master, there are other chess masters you want to beat or outperform. And to me business is just a sport that I love to compete in; a continuous intellectual challenge that really motivates me.'
(The American businessman, investor, and owner of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks)



Mort Walker: 'Life is like a game of chess. There are many moves possible, but each move determines your next move. Where you wind up is the sum total of all your past moves. But first you have to make some sort of move.'
(The American comic strip writer, best known for creating the syndicated newspaper comic strips Beetle Bailey in 1950 and Hi and Lois in 1954, who died in January aged 94)

Stephen Fry: 'From the time *homo ludens* crawled from the primeval slime of spillikins and strip checkers and first called himself a man, the 64 squares and 32 pieces that define limits of chess have exerted a powerful fascination over the species.'
(The opening sentence to the comedian/writer's review of Garry Kasparov's autobiography, Child of Change, in The Listener magazine, 5 November 1987)

Charles Dickens: 'Yes, I play chess a little. I have sometimes played and won a game – it's a mere trick – without seeing the board.' *(The egregious James Carless, in the author's classic book Dombey and Son)*

John Maynard Keynes: 'Chess is a cure for headaches.'

Isaac Asimov: 'In life, unlike chess, the game continues after checkmate.'

E.M. Forster: 'Chess is a forcing house where fruits of character can ripen more full than in life.'
(The English novelist and essayist, who wrote A Room with a View and A Passage to India)

Stanley Ellin: 'The way he plays chess demonstrates a man's whole nature.'
(The American mystery writer and three-time winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award, 1916-1986)

Jorden van Foreest: 'Lucas doesn't cope with losses very well, so the best thing is not to talk to him for a while.' *(The young Dutch star explains why his brother, Lucas, was not willing to do any media interview after he beat him in the opening round of the Tata Steel Challengers)*

Jerry Spinelli: 'I feel like I'm playing chess underwater. The pieces keep floating away. I don't know where things are. I can't figure out tomorrow.' *(The American children's author, in his book Smiles to Go, about the skateboarding, science geek, pepperoni pizza-eating chess champion and control freak, Will Tuppence)*

World Champion claims playoff after tie for first with Anish Giri

Magnus Carlsen tops Wijk aan Zee for a record 6th time

by **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM**

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Calm after the storm. Anish Giri and Magnus Carlsen suppress their emotions as they get up after the World Champion has clinched the playoff.

The Tata Steel Chess Tournament celebrated 80 years of chess in Wijk aan Zee with a superb jubilee edition. Both the current and two former World Champions attended the party and there was an abundance of mouth-watering chess. The home-crowd was kept in suspense by the stellar performance of Anish Giri, who looked poised to become the first Dutch winner since Jan Timman's victory in 1985. After 13 riveting rounds Giri shared first place with Magnus Carlsen and under the new rules a blitz playoff was to determine the winner. Carlsen tends to win playoffs. Always. And this one was no exception. With unfaltering determination the Norwegian took the title to become the most successful player in the rich history of Wijk aan Zee.

Sometimes when you see something, there's this strong hunch that you will think back to this moment later. As if you made a note, the image is etched in your memory. This happened when Anish Giri was invited onto the stage to draw his number at the official opening of the 80th Tata Steel Chess Tournament. The Dutchman picked up one of the metal boxes, and on the bottom it said: 1. While the audience laughed approvingly, Giri could barely suppress a broad smile and pointedly stuck his finger in the air, as if he wanted everyone to believe the omen.

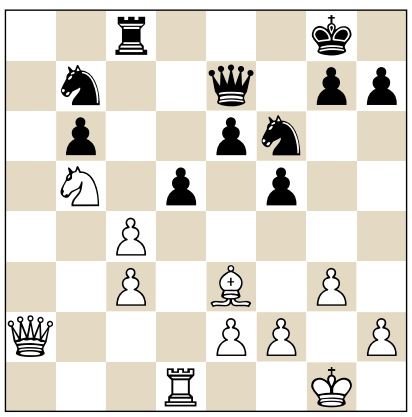
Chess players tend to be superstitious, even if they say they are not, and no one objects to drawing number one. It feels good and if nothing else it guarantees you an extra game with the white pieces. The last time Giri played 7 of his 13 games in Wijk aan Zee with white was in 2015, when he shared second place, half a point behind Magnus Carlsen.

Perhaps the extra white game was exactly the encouragement Giri needed to convince himself that he could indeed fight for first place, as he had said in a couple of interviews on the eve of the tournament. This self-confidence may have been a bit puzzling to those who had seen him struggle with his form for a good part of 2017, but he knew that it was not an empty boast. December had been a month of serious preparation and reflection, and he had skipped the World Rapid & Blitz in Riyadh. For two weeks he worked on his chess and physical fitness at the Dutch Olympic training centre of Papendal. Because his regular second, Erwin l'Ami, would play the Challengers, he had invited his old coach Vladimir Chuchelov, both for the training session and to accompany him to Wijk aan Zee.

Dramatic score

His first two games, both with White, could not have gone better. Against Hou Yifan he managed to keep up the pressure in an objectively equal queen ending, taking his chance when she finally slipped up. The next day he faced Vladimir Kramnik, an opponent against whom he had a dramatic score and whom he had never beaten before.

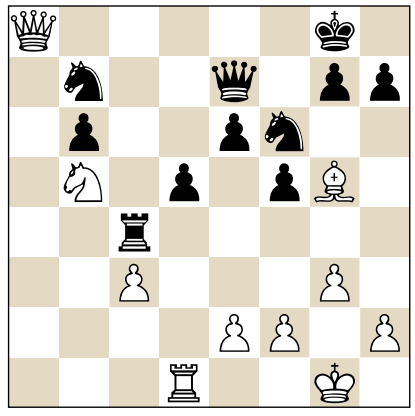
Anish Giri
Vladimir Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (2)



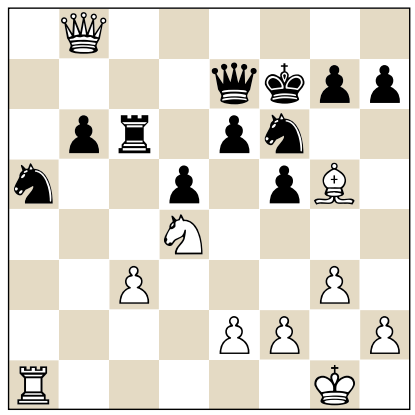
position after 21...d5

White has a risk-free advantage. With his next move, a temporary pawn sacrifice, Giri changes the character of the game.

22.♗g5!? Shifting the focus from the weak pawns to the weak king, which is never pleasant, especially in time-trouble. **22...♖xc4** Black can afford this capture, since due to some tactical finesses he will not lose by force. **23.♕a8+**

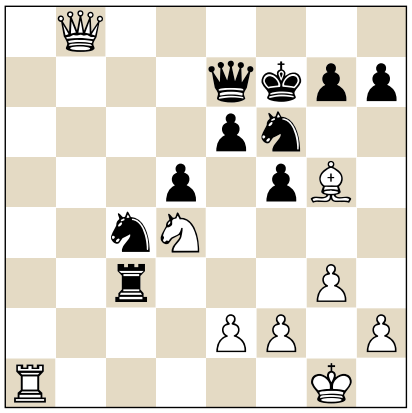


This appears winning, but Black has a strong defensive resource. **23...♔f7!** Since 23...♕e8 24.♕xb7 ♕xb5 loses to 25.♕e7! ♕c6 26.♖a1, while after 23...♘d8 24.♗xf6 gxf6 (24...♕xf6 25.♖xd5 exd5 26.♕xd5+ is the same; White wins a pawn and the game) 25.♖xd5! exd5 26.♕xd5+ ♕e6 27.♕xd8+ ♔g7 28.♘c7 the queen plus knight combo starts performing: 28...♕f7 29.♘e8+ ♔g6 30.♘d6 ♕e6 31.♘xc4 ♕xc4 32.♕d3, with a winning queen ending. **24.♖a1!** The second wave of the attack. After 24.♕xb7 ♕xb7 25.♘d6+ ♔e7! 26.♘xb7 ♖c7 is the point. The white knight is trapped. **24...♘a5 25.♕b8! ♖c6?!** Black's move looks natural, but 25...♘c6! was a stronger defensive resource here: 26.♕xb6 h6! 27.♗xf6 ♔xf6! 28.♖a8 ♕d7!, and with a few more strong computer moves Black will hold a position that looked lost. **26.♘d4!**



26...♖xc3? The losing mistake. 26...♖d6! looks extremely suspect, but it was the only move: 27.♘f3 ♕d8! 28.♘e5+ ♔f8! 29.♕a7 ♕e7! 30.♕a6 ♘c4!, and again the computer performed a miracle escape. White

is only slightly better after capturing twice on c4. **27.♕xb6 ♘c4 28.♕b8!**



Threatening ♖a7 and preparing to meet 28...♖a3 with 29.♖b1!. This last detail is what Black had probably overlooked. **28...♘d7?** Losing on the spot. Black's best chance was 28...♖a3 29.♖b1 ♔g6 30.♖b7 ♕e8, and now both the lazy 31.♕xe8 ♘xe8 32.♘xe6 and the more ambitious 31.♕c7 are winning for White. **29.♗xe7!** A surprising idea that leads to a clean finish. **29...♘xb8 30.♗b4** Suddenly the rook is trapped in broad daylight. **30...e5 31.♖a7+ ♔g8 32.♗xc3 exd4 33.♗xd4 ♘c6 34.♖xg7+ ♔f8 35.♗f6** 1-0.

Stylish coup de grâce

After five rounds, Giri topped the table together with Vishy Anand and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. The Azeri number one looked in great shape and proved that his qualification to the Candidates' tournament and his second place in the world rankings were no fluke. Many may remember 'Shakh' as at times unpredictable and unstable, but he seems to have left those days behind him. Mamedyarov himself explained his excellent play by pointing at the positive influence his wife has had on him and the simple fact that he has stopped drinking.

Anand returned to Wijk aan Zee sharing the highest number of wins in the history of the event, five, with Magnus Carlsen. The general feeling was that this jubilee edition would be the perfect occasion for the Norwegian to become the sole record holder, but we all know that general expectations often fail to impress the Indian wizard. In Round 3, he defeated Fabiano Caruana – a harbinger for a dramatic performance of the American that would cost him a whopping 26.6 rating points. Anand's stylish coup de grâce, 42.♖d6!, was praised in a tweet by the World Champion.

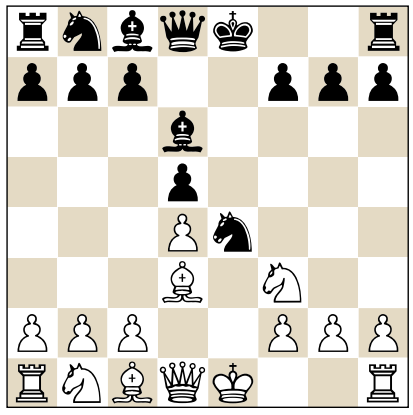
ALINA L'AMI

Having drawn number one, Anish Giri barely manages to suppress a broad smile and pointedly sticks his finger in the air, as if he wants everyone to believe the omen.

NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

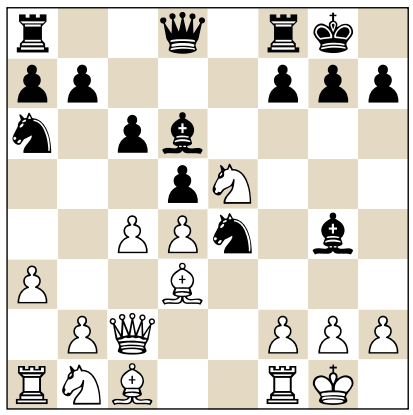
Vishy Anand
Fabiano Caruana
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (3)
Petroff Defence, Marshall Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3 ♗d6



So far no real surprise. This is Fabiano Caruana's favourite sub-variation in the Petroff Defence. He had already made a very comfortable draw with it against Magnus Carlsen, so this was obviously the main thing that I had prepared for.

7.0-0 0-0 8.c4 c6 9.♕c2 ♘a6 10.a3 ♗g4 11.♘e5



The first time Black has a choice. He can now take on e5 and play ...♘c5, or put the bishop on h5. So with some anticipation I waited for his move.

11...♗f5 12.b4 ♘c7

And finally, here it is. This is the new move, and judging by the speed with which he played it was obviously well prepared.

13.f3

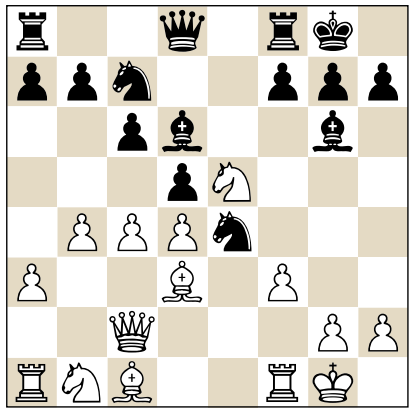
The problem with interpolating

‘In a tweet the World Champion praised Anand’s coup de grâce, 42.♖d6!’

13.cxd5 cxd5 is that after 14.f3 ♘e6 even ...♖c8 starts to assume importance.

13...♗g6

A remarkable move. White attacks the knight and Black simply steps aside with the bishop, but of course this is tactically justified.



14.c5

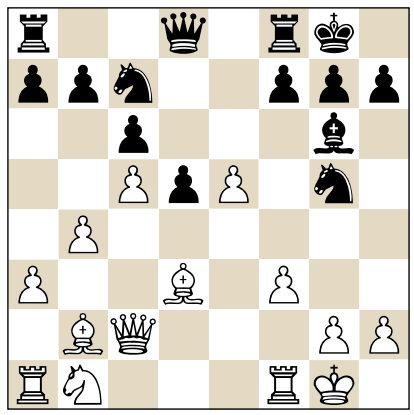
Even though it was very clear that it was his preparation, I searched and searched, and in the end I made the move that I would have made anyway. One advantage of 14.c5 is that it doesn’t allow the centre to explode, and after 16.♗b2 I will have the hope of pushing my f-pawn. I still felt that White could fight for an advantage even.

As said, White does not win material after 14.♘xg6 fxg6 15.fxe4 (15.c5 invites 15...♗xh2+ 16.♔xh2 ♕h4+ 17.♔g1 ♘g3 and Black wins) because of 15...dxe4! 16.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 17.♗xe4 ♕xd4+ 18.♔f1, when 18...♕f6+! (better than 18...♕xa1 19.♗b2 ♕a2 20.♗d3 ♘e6 21.♘c3 ♘d4 22.♘xa2 ♘xc2 23.♗xc2) 19.♔g1 ♕d4+ is a cute draw.

Taking on e4 right away doesn’t work either: 14.fxe4 ♗xe5 15.dxe5 dxe4 16.♗e2 ♕d4+ 17.♔h1 ♕xa1 18.♗b2 ♕a2 19.♘c3 e3!, and White is in big trouble.

14...♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♘g5 16.♗b2

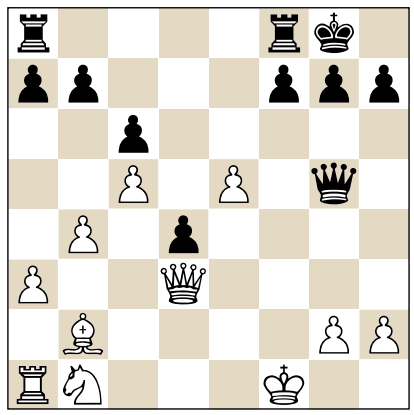
White’s threat is very simple: to play ♘d2 and then f4, and then Black will have to decide what he can do with the knight on g5.



16...d4? A bit of an extreme reaction, as it turned out. Admittedly, the threat of ♘d2 and f4 did look strong to me as well, but it turns out there were a couple of ways for Black to react. The first one was 16...♗xd3 17.♕xd3 and now simply 17...g6 18.f4 ♘e4 19.♘d2 ♘xd2 20.♕xd2 ♘e6 21.♖ae1. More interesting is 17...♘ge6, allowing 18.f4 g6 19.f5 gxf5 20.♖xf5 ♘g7 21.♖f6, but that can be unpleasant with the two rooks.

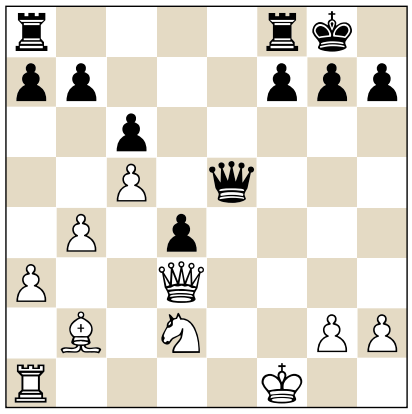
Which leads to the hidden solution 17...a5! 18.♘d2 (18.f4 ♘e4) 18...axb4 19.axb4 ♖xa1 20.♗xa1 ♘ge6 21.f4 g6, when after the exchange of a set of rooks the f5 plan is no longer effective. If Black had done this, he would have been completely fine.

17.f4 ♘d5 18.fxg5 ♘e3 19.♕d2 ♗xd3 20.♕xd3 ♘xf1 21.♔xf1 ♕xg5



The last few moves have been forced after 16...d4. Black is hoping to collect a couple of pawns for the set of minor pieces that constitutes White’s material advantage. Taking with the king on f1 was necessary for White, so the knight can be developed to d2 next.

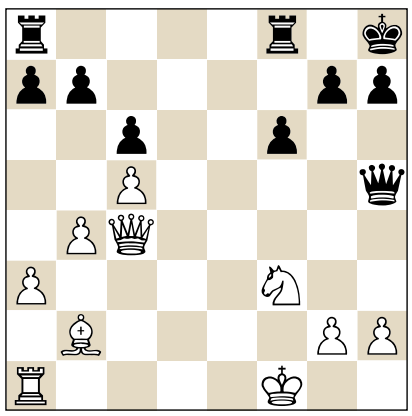
22.♘d2 ♕xe5



23.♘f3? This, however, is a really terrible move and one that spoiled my mood afterwards. I originally wanted to play 23.♘c4, but then, at the last minute, I tried to see if I could get the same without giving up the pawn on h2. But the problem is that now it will be very difficult to free the knight and get it into play.

Of course, 23.♘c4! was the correct move, because after the sequence 23...♕xh2 24.♕xd4 ♕g3 White plays 25.♘d6, and this knight essentially makes it impossible for Black to ever double his rooks on the e-file. That guarantees White a large advantage. The extra pawn on h2 is irrelevant now and likely to stay that way in the later part of the game.

23...♕h5 24.♕xd4 f6 25.♕c4+ ♔h8 Here I realized there was almost no way to get my knight to a good square. So rather reluctantly I tried to do the next best thing and roll my bishop over via c1 and f4 to d6.



26.♗c1 ♖fe8 27.♗f4 a5

Even though this move is not a mistake in itself, I believe that Fabiano could

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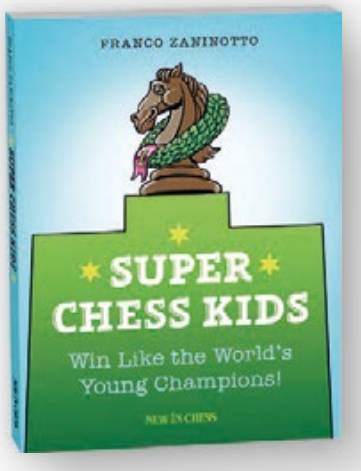

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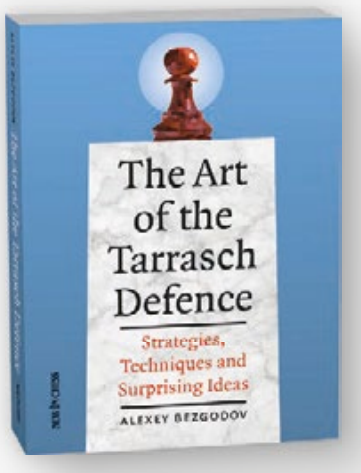

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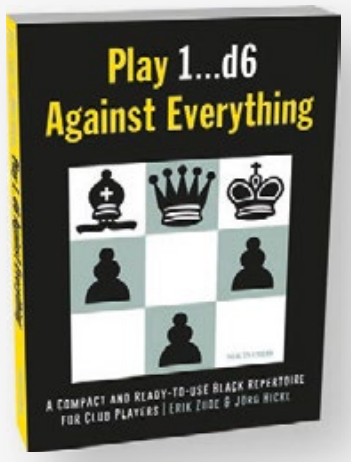

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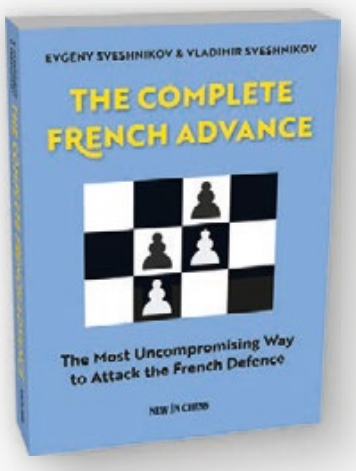
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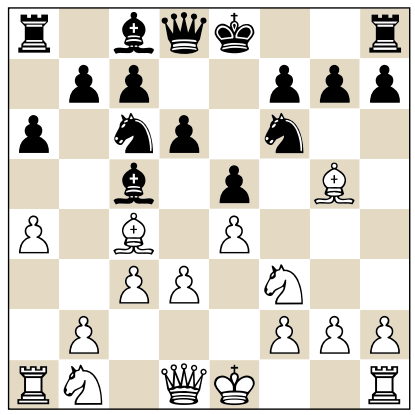
NOTES BY
Vladimir Kramnik

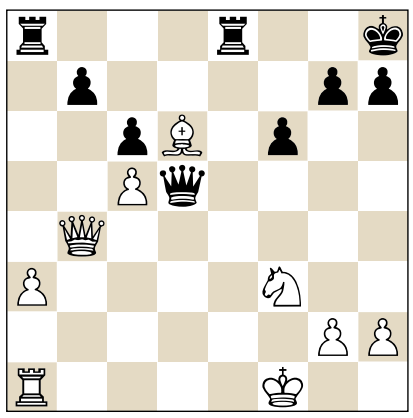
Vishy Anand
Vladimir Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (7)
Italian Game, Giuoco Pianissimo

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.a4
The main complexity of the modern interpretation of the Italian Game, which in recent times has become so popular, lies in the incredible number of move orders, cunning and subtle. Everyone becomes confused in them, even the experts. Anand decided to surprise me, and I will not venture to say exactly what he had in mind, but in the end a clear conclusion can be drawn: it was he who became confused.
5...d6 6.c3 a6 7.♗g5

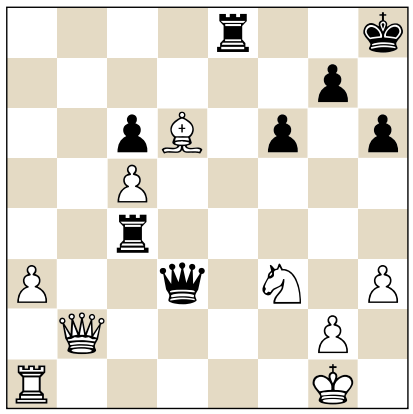


The plan with the development of the bishop at g5 nowadays occurs quite often. Previously in the Ruy Lopez and the Italian Game this manoeuvre was considered bad, but in our time a reassessment of values has occurred. Of course, it is advantageous for White to carry it out before castling, but the main factor of the given position, in my view, is that Black has not yet castled, and he has a strong rejoinder.
7...h6 8.♗h4 ♗a7 9.♘bd2 ♕e7
An important resource. Either Vishy did not pay particular attention to it, or he thought that at some point Black should automatically castle. The essence of the idea is that after 0-0, Black plays ...g5 and begins, so

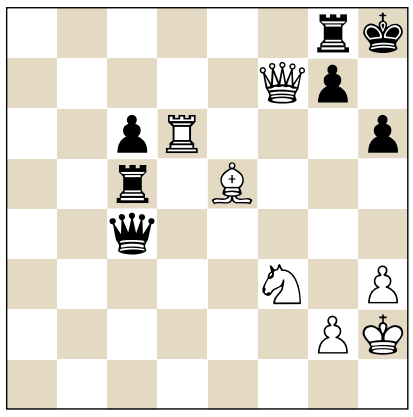
have played 27...♕f5 without even thinking. The problem is that after 28.♗d6 ♖e3, although White has a nice bishop on d6 which takes away a few squares, Black being doubled on the e-file makes it more or less impossible for White to achieve anything.
28.♗d6 axb4 29.♕xb4 ♕d5?
Black's last three moves have been part of the same mistaken sequence. The problem was that Fabiano had calculated a line and it just had a big mistake in it. Having got here, I double-checked to be sure and happily took the pawn on b7.



30.♕xb7 h6 The following variation shows why the line that Fabiano had calculated doesn't work: 30...♖xa3 31.♖xa3 ♕d1+ 32.♔f2 ♕c2+ 33.♔g3 ♕g6+ 34.♔h3 ♕h5+ 35.♘h4 g5 36.♕b4, and Black can resign.
31.♔g1 Fairly simple. With my bishop taking away the b8-square, there is no immediate threat. My king would now like to go to h2, where it will be extremely safe. That's pretty much it; Black simply doesn't have any compensation.
31...♖a4 32.h3 ♖c4 33.♕b2 ♕d3



34.♖a2! This was a very pleasing move to make and it's good technique as well. After this Black has no way left to mount an attack. The second rank is much more important than the first. As you can see in the remaining moves, Black is unable to do anything by getting to the first rank, but ...♖c2 and ...♖e2 would have been much harder to deal with.
34...♕d1+ 35.♔h2 ♖c1 36.a4 f5 37.♕b7 f4 38.♗xf4 ♖xc5 39.♖d2 ♕xa4 40.♕f7 ♖g8 41.♗e5 ♕c4
Obviously, the last few moves White has had many ways to play, but the moves I made were perfectly OK. I hadn't really noticed 41...♕c4, assuming that Black was lost already. And here I saw the chance to play a move that is aesthetically very pleasing:
42.♖d6!



Black resigned. White threatens 43.♖xh6 mate, and after 42...♕c1 there is 43.♖d8.

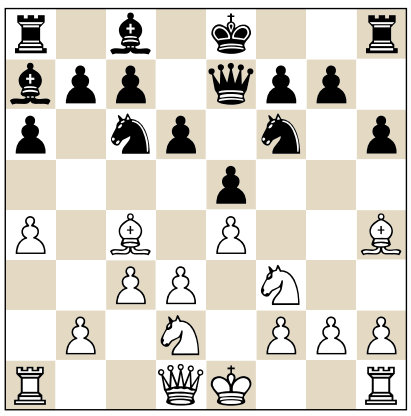
■ ■ ■

Anand would end in shared fifth place. It was the only game that he lost – against his old rival Vladimir Kramnik in Round 7 – that made all the difference. Kramnik contributed heavily to the entertainment with six wins and two losses, and he was generally happy about his play and his result. 'I hadn't expected it, since I had not especially prepared for this tournament. I didn't play for two and a half months. I was rusty at the beginning, but then things started to get better.' His win against Anand was a fine strategic lesson for anyone interested in the mysteries of the Italian Game.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Former World Champions Vishy Anand and Vladimir Kramnik have a relaxed chat before their game. The Russian won, inflicting the Indian's only loss.

to speak, to roll up the kingside. Here White's position is rather dangerous. Objectively he is probably not worse, but in a practical game he can easily get mated.

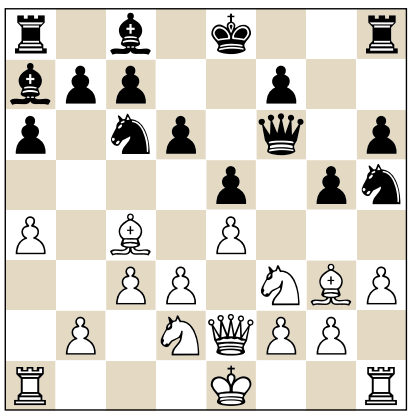


10.h3 Anand thought for some time over this move. To me his decision does not seem good, although I cannot say with certainty what would be a good one.

10...g5 11.♗g3 ♘h5

This is the tactical idea of the move ...♕e7. With the queen on d8 in such positions White has ♘xe5, but here it is very important that 12.♘xe5 does not work because of 12...♘xg3 13.♘xc6 ♗xf2+ (the simplest) 14.♔xf2 ♘xh1+ 15.♔g1 bxc6. But if this is so, it means that Black simply has a splendid position.

12.♕e2 ♕f6 Obviously it is now Black who is fighting for an advantage. He exchanges the enemy bishop for his knight, his dark-squared bishop is very strong, and the weakening associated with the move ...g7-g5 is imaginary, since castling has not yet been played. Black has an enormous number of interesting options, and the choice is a matter of taste. He could, for example, have played 12...♘xg3 13.fxg3 h5, in order not to allow g3-g4, and subsequently prepare ...0-0-0 and ...g5-g4. The plan with ...♕f6 is more standard and natural.

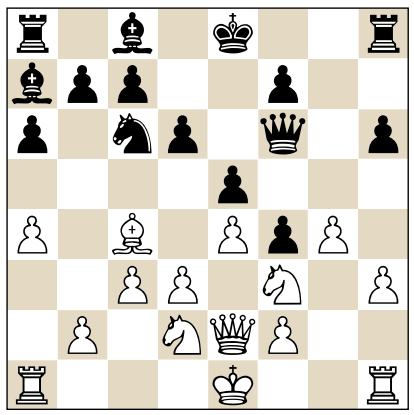


13.♗h2

If 13.b4, then 13...♘e7, followed by playing the knight to g6. After the game Vishy said that 13.♘h2 would apparently have been more accurate, but then I don't have to take the bishop – I can play ...♕g6 and ...f7-f5. Here I really don't like White's position. Apart from anything else, it is not easy for him to cover his king.

13...♘f4 Once again quite a good move, but it was also possible to play 13...♖g8 or 13...♗d7.

14.♗xf4 gxf4 15.g4 A natural reaction, since otherwise the g2-pawn could have subsequently been attacked.



A critical moment. Black has various ideas. One of them is to capture 15...fxg3 16.fxg3 and then, say, 16...♕g7 17.g4 ♘e7. The knight is aiming for f4, therefore 18.♘h4 ♗d7. The computer likes this more – it thinks that Black is slightly better. This is obviously the case – Black has a good position thanks to his superiority on the dark squares, but from the human point of view this seemed a little strange to me: I allow the opponent's pieces to become active, and the white knights begin jumping. I especially didn't want to allow this against Anand – he plays very strongly with knights. Against another player I might have captured on g3.

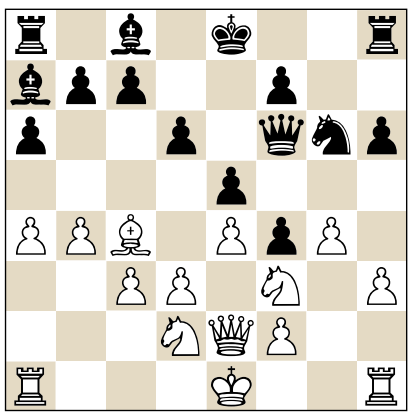
Initially I was planning to quickly make the logical looking move 15...♗d7, but then I became concerned about 16.♗d5. It is not desirable to put the knight on d8 – it is not clear where it will go after that. White can even reply 17.d4. At not the greatest depth the computer suggests 16...0-0-0 17.b4 ♘e7, but

this seems amateurish play – 18.♗c4, threatening b4-b5... For the computer there is no attack here, but a human does not really want to play this.

15...♘e7 Planning to answer 16.d4 with 16...♗d7 and then 0-0-0, since with the pawn on d4 White can hardly organise any attack. The computer continues to assess the position as slightly better for Black, and I agree with it.

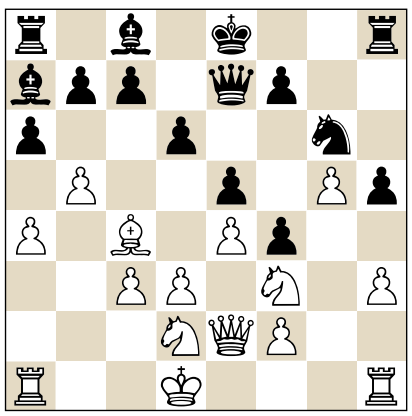
16.b4 A move made spontaneously. Perhaps it would have been more circumspect not to weaken the position for the moment, and to play 16.♔d1 and ♔c2.

16...♘g6



Here Vishy was over-hasty. He should have had a deep think, because the strategic risk in White's position is very great. He played in the most natural way, but meanwhile it was time to devise something cunning, out of the ordinary. For example, 17.b5 h5 18.g5 ♕e7 and here direct the king to g2 – 19.♔f1. From the human point of view it cannot be said that on the kingside the king is safe, but perhaps here White has more chances of gaining play.

17.♔d1 h5 18.g5 ♕e7 19.b5



'I especially didn't want to allow this against Anand – he plays very strongly with knights.'

19...♔f8!

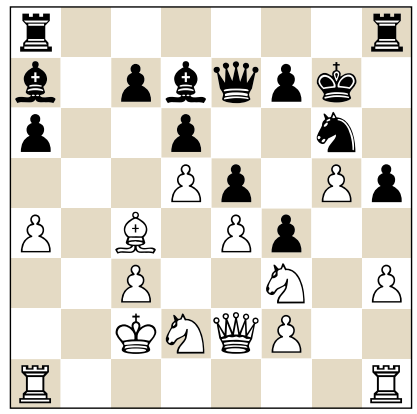
Objectively, 19...c6 was evidently not bad, but I played in accordance with my intended plan. At g7 the black king will be completely safe, whereas for the white king there is no such place on the entire board. When it stands at c2, Black simply begins to open up the play on the queenside, launching a slow but certain attack. In addition, it is very important that White also has problems on the kingside. The h3-pawn is all the time hanging – the rook cannot be moved from h1, and as soon as h3-h4 is played, Black acquires the g4-square.

20.bxa6 Probably, sooner or later this has to be played.

20...bxa6 21.d4 ♔g7 22.d5

One can understand Vishy's desire to block the flank, because Black's plans include ...c7-c6 and even ...exd4.

22...♗d7 23.♔c2



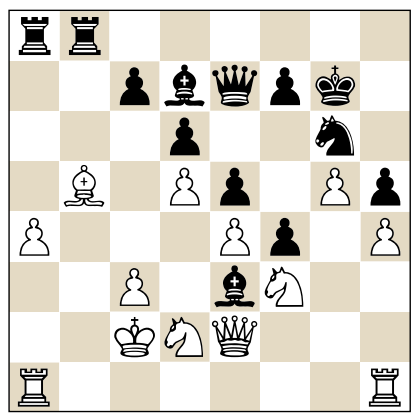
23...♖hb8 Now the computer wants to play 24.h4, when Black has a pleasant choice between the immediate 24...c6 and 24...♕e8 25.a5 ♗a4+ 26.♔c1 ♗b5 followed by ...c7-c6, when the white king looks completely unsettled. This, so to speak, is no cure, whereas the unexpected move 24.♘e1!, simply giving up the g5-pawn, would have made it possible to block the queenside – 24...♕xg5 25.♘d3. Here Black no longer has a direct attack, although he has an extra pawn and he does not have to worry about the g-file. Even so, this was the best chance for White, but apparently the idea simply did not occur to Vishy.

24.♗xa6 ♗xf2 25.♗b5

With the help of this construction White tries to hold the queenside. A risky undertaking, but there is no longer anything that is non-risky.

25...♗e3 Now problems arise on the kingside, and in some variations a pawn is lost, for example, 26.♘c4 ♗xb5 27.axb5 ♕d7 28.♘xe3 fxe3 29.c4 ♖xa1 30.♖xa1 ♕xh3 31.♕xe3 h4, when most probably the passed h-pawn will simply become a queen.

26.h4



26...♖a5 The most logical was 26...♗xb5 27.axb5 ♕d7, and now 28.♕c4 ♖xa1 29.♖xa1 ♕xb5 30.♕xb5 ♖xb5 31.♘b3(c4) ♗f2 32.♖h1. Naturally, this is not very pleasant for White, but his position still has somehow to be breached. Vishy likes erecting this kind of fortification. It is probable that Black should gradually be able to destroy it, but I considered my position to be already so good, that I preferred not to hurry to begin an attack.

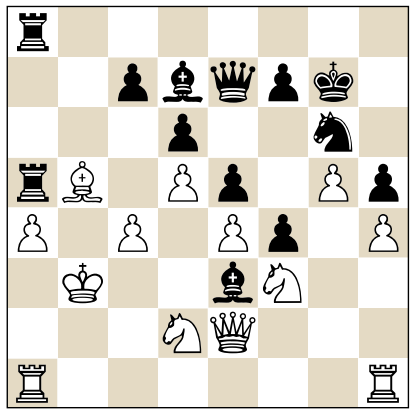
27.c4 ♖ba8

The immediate 27...♗g4 is also possible.

28.♔b3

There is also 28.♘b3, after which equally strong are 28...♖xa4 29.♖xa4 ♖xa4 30.♗xa4 ♗xa4 31.♖a1 ♕d7, when among other things I want to capture on b3 and take the queen to the kingside,

and 28...♖5a7 29.a5 ♗g4 30.a6 ♕d8 31.♕f1 ♕c8, when the exchange sacrifice on a6 is imminent with an invasion now on the queenside.



28...♘f8

This was already a matter of aesthetics. I realized that 28...♕e8 followed by ...c7-c6 was the simplest – everything is tied up, and at some point Black will inevitably land a tactical blow. However, the slow manoeuvre of the knight to c5 appealed to me, since the white king has been placed on b3. However, the move is not only pretty, but also objectively strong. White's position is already disintegrating.

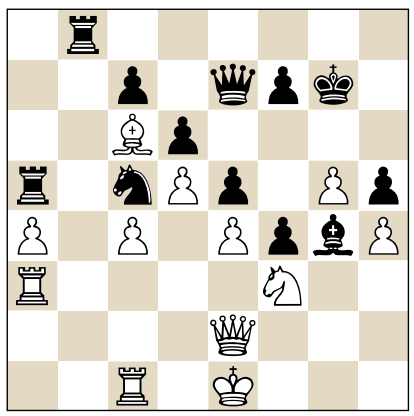
29.♖hc1 ♗g4 30.♔c2 ♗xd2 31.♔xd2 ♘d7

White has too many weaknesses, including his king.

32.♖a3 ♘c5

Black wants to play ♗d7, after which without fuss and bother he will pick up the a4-pawn. Then after a move by the white knight he will always have ...♔g6 – I very much liked this set-up: White has no counterplay, and Black calmly breaks through on the a-file.

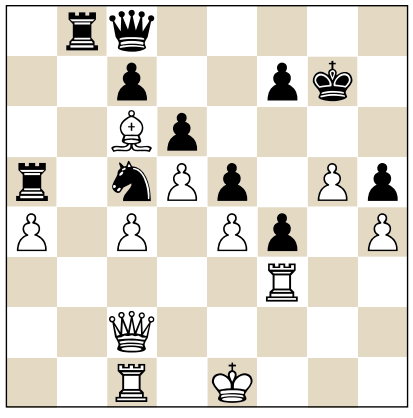
33.♗c6 ♖b8 34.♔e1



34...♕d8

The computer suggests 34...f6, opening up the play on the kingside. Here all roads lead to Rome. But the inclusion of the queen via g8 in certain variations very much appealed to me, for example, 35.♗b5 ♖ba8 36.♖ca1 ♕g8 (of course, here also 36...♗d7 can be played), and after ...♕h7 the e4-pawn simply falls.

35.♕c2 ♗xf3 36.♖xf3 ♕c8



The queen comes to g4, everything collapses, the computer assessment is already 'minus 4', and Vishy curtailed his suffering and resigned. It cannot be said that he played badly; simply he obtained an unpromising position in the opening, and then he was unable to change sharply the course of the play or avoid a direct attack by 24.♘e1.

In the aesthetic sense this was an attractive game: Black won exclusively by manoeuvring with his pieces, hardly firing a single shot. Such a dream for a pensioner – to manage without calculating variations.

■ ■ ■

After seven rounds Kramnik was on plus-2, just like Wesley So, Giri and Carlsen. They were a full point behind the seemingly unstoppable Mamedyarov, who, after an early win against Hou Yifan, had scored a hat-trick in Rounds 5-7 against Caruana, Adhiban and Wei Yi. In Round 8, Giri faced Mamedyarov with the white pieces. If he wanted to fight for first place, the Dutchman had to win.

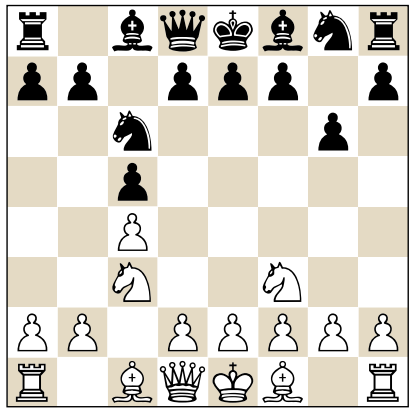
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Anish Giri
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (8)
English Opening, Symmetrical Variation

1.c4

For me it is a certainty that my opponents will be unable to predict my first move, because most of the time I am unable to predict it myself.

1...c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6

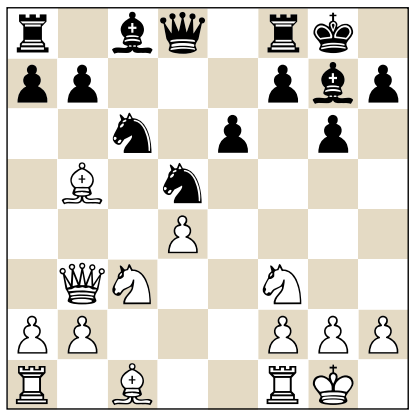


This variation has come back into fashion again. As a fashionista, I also had a look at it.

3...e5 has regularly been played by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, while 3...♘f6 is another respected continuation, recently used by Vishy Anand.

4.e3 This move, and the seven that follow, were played quickly. Instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, both players decided to follow the established theory.

4...♘f6 5.d4 cxd4 6.exd4 d5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♕b3 e6 9.♗b5 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0



11.♗xc6

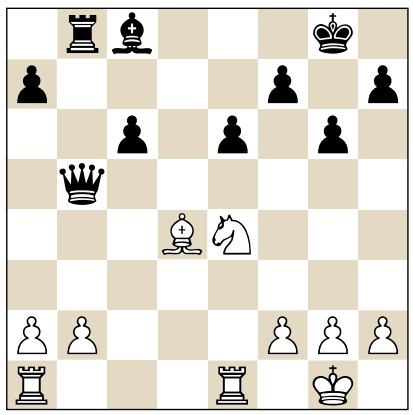
ALINA L'AMI

The first 'Chess on Tour' day took the Masters to Hilversum, the capital of Dutch radio and television, where they were welcomed by the cast of Sesame Street.

By giving up the bishop, White is ruining Black's pawn structure. According to the established theory, this is White's main attempt to fight for an edge.

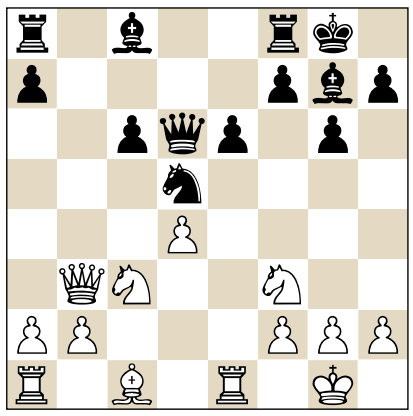
11...bxc6 12.♖e1 A hesitant move that had been played only once in this position, which has occurred around 50 times in practice already.

An interesting game was played by a fellow-countryman of Shakhriyar's: 12.♘a4 (the most popular continuation) 12...♕d6 13.♖e1 ♖b8 14.♕d1 ♘e7 15.♗d2 ♘f5 16.♗c3 ♖d8 17.♘c5 ♘xd4 18.♘e4 ♕d5 19.♘xd4 ♗xd4 20.♕a4 ♕b5 21.♕xd4 ♖xd4 22.♗xd4



with beautiful compensation for the queen (1-0, 71) in Grischuk-Safarli, Riyadh 2017. It is safe to assume that the analytical forces of Azerbaijan had prepared an improvement for Black along the way.

12...♕d6? Played almost instantly, probably remembering Safarli's game incorrectly.



13.♘e4! Now the knight obviously goes via the centre, gaining quite a few tempi.

13...♕b4 14.♕c2!

14.♗d2 ♕xb3 15.axb3 leads to a favourable endgame for White that is typical for this variation. Yet, the game continuation is even stronger.

14...a5

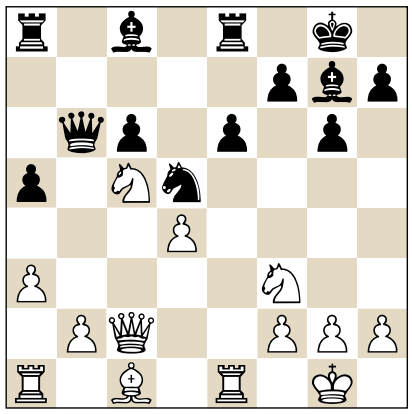
Taking on d4 was not a good option in view of ♗d2, followed by ♘xd4, when the dark squares are all gaping.

15.a3 More logical was 15.♗d2, but it is good to take away the b4-square from the knight in advance.

15...♕b6

There was something to be said for placing the queen on b5, but then Black would always have to pay attention to ♘d6, hitting the queen.

16.♘c5 ♖e8



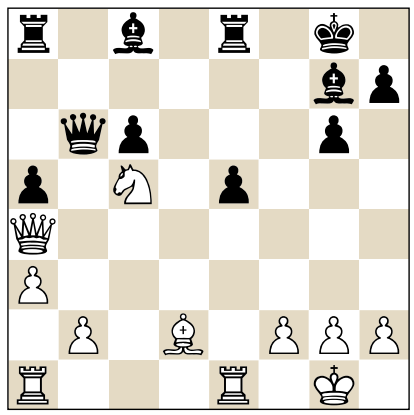
17.♘e5! I could have played more modestly, but having gained so many extra tempi in the opening, I decided that I deserved to have some fun with my knights.

17...f6

Black's only chance to create any play at all now is connected with ...f6-e5.

18.♘c4 ♕c7 19.♗d2 The a5-pawn is doomed. **19...e5 20.dxe5 fxe5 21.♕a4 ♘b6?!** This is a very sad move. I expected Black to go all desperado and try to create some illusion of an initiative on the kingside. It is difficult to suggest how, but I had expected a move like 21...♖f8 or 21...♗f5.

22.♘xb6 ♕xb6



At first I thought my position was overwhelming, then I saw that it was

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My Black Secrets in the Modern Italian

and

My Secret Weapon: 1.b3

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The Italian Game is considered a sound but quiet opening without early trades, giving rise to rich positions where plans are more important than forced variations — in short, an ideal avenue to outplay your opponent without having to learn much theory. But how should you approach new positions and keep a clear head in view of so many playable possibilities? The best way is this: you sit down next to a world class grandmaster and just listen to him!

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MY SECRET WEAPON: 1.b3

The Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack with 1.b3 (or 1.Nf3 followed by 2.b3) is a system, rather neglected by theorists, which nevertheless can be a forceful weapon in the hands of an ambitious white player. Even Bobby Fischer tried this opening in various games, sometimes preferring it to his beloved 1.e4, and its greatest advocate was the legendary Danish fighter Bent Larsen. Meanwhile, 1.b3 has also found its way into the practice of today's world elite, and now finally a modern top ten player has taken on the subject for ChessBase: none other than Grandmaster Wesley So!

In a total of nine video clips, So talks to IM Oliver Reeh, explaining his view of White's strategy after the four main replies bv Black: 1...e5, 1...d5 (2.Nf3!), 1...c5 and 1...Nf6. Often, play transposes to openings like the Queen's Indian or the Nimzo Indian with reversed colours where White simply is a valuable tempo up. Also possible are transitions to the English where once again the move 1.b3 proves very advantageous to White — his bishop will always be the first to appear on the long diagonal!

This DVD also provides insights in the personal thinking of a modern top grandmaster. For example, you'll get to know that So particularly appreciates the bishop pair, but also enjoys enemy doubled pawns (after for instance, Bb2xNf6!). Broaden your chess mind with GM Wesley So and 1.b3!

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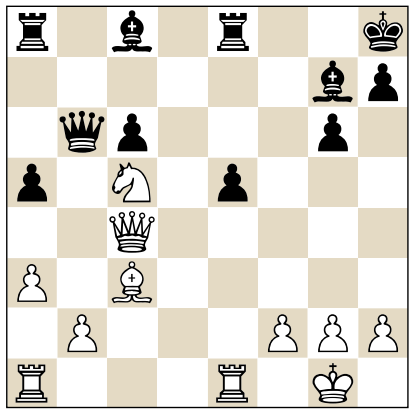
still not so simple to win it, but after some further pondering I came to the conclusion that it was indeed as good as it looked.

23.♕c4+ ♔h8 24.♗c3

The dumbest way to play is, in fact, quite powerful.



24...♗f5?

The final mistake. Now White wins some extra time thanks to a cute tactic, and the game has essentially been decided.

24...♕b5 was Black's last chance. White is likely to end up with an extra pawn in the endgame, but Black would have slightly better chances than in the game: 25.♕xb5 cxb5, and White will eventually win a pawn with ♖ad1-d5 or simply 26.f4, while the computer smartly indicates that the waiting move 26.h3!? may be the best.

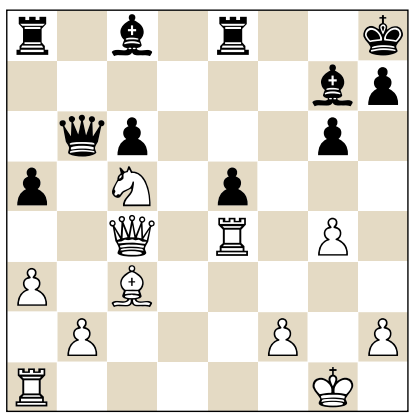
25.g4! Sending the bishop home.

25...♗c8

25...♗xg4? 26.♘a4! is the point.

26.♖e4!?

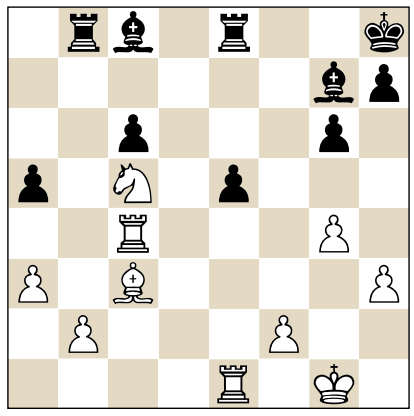
26.♖ad1 was strong, too, obviously, but this looks grander.



26...♕b5 27.♖ae1!

This time around, White can ignore the offer of the queen trade and let Black take on c4 himself, keeping the black queenside pawns weak and isolated.

27...♕xc4 28.♖xc4 ♖b8 29.h3!



Upon closer examination it becomes apparent that Black has no good moves. White will eventually win a couple of pawns with ♘e4 or ♖a4 or ♖d1-d6, but for now it makes sense to prepare for all of that with some useful moves.

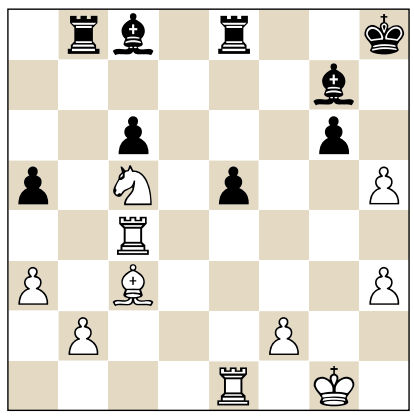
29...h5

29...♔g8 would be a decent way to pass, when White could continue the sadistic approach with ♔g2, f3 and a4 or simply start picking up the full house with 30.♘e4!? ♖b6 31.♖a4!.

30.gxh5!?

I decided it was time to start picking up the pawns.

30.♖d1! was very strong as well, preparing to penetrate.



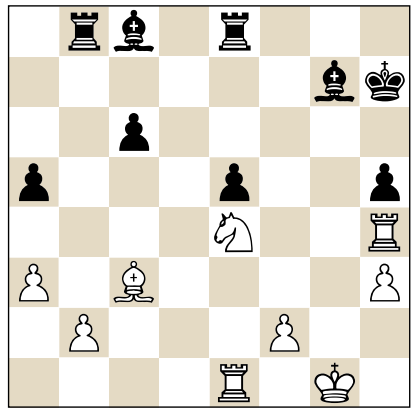
30...gxh5

30...e4 leads to a technically lost endgame a couple of pawns down, but at least Black would be able to continue the struggle for a while: 31.hxg6 ♗xc3 32.bxc3 ♗xh3 33.♖exe4, and two extra pawns should be enough. Black will soon regain the g6-pawn, but in return White will win the a5 or c6 soldier.

31.♖h4 ♔h7

A clever move, preparing to meet 32.♖xh5+ with 32...♔g6, but now the final touch follows.

32.♘e4!



Black resigned. And while it seems that Black's resignation is premature, once you start calculating the variations, you will quickly notice that although the material is still equal, Black's position is about to collapse (tellingly, the computer's +3.00 evaluation indicates that White's advantage is equal to three extra pawns!).

■ ■ ■

Mamedyarov's sudden return to earth caused great enthusiasm among the Dutch fans, but the real sensation of the day was Carlsen's win against Gawain Jones. A most remarkable oversight cost the World Champion a full piece. He was lost as early as move 17, but as he rightly noted afterwards, the pressure was now on his opponent. Objectively speaking, Black was clearly winning, but it wasn't a position 'that played itself'. There was enough room for Jones to go wrong, as he would find out in a dramatic turnaround. With this spectacular win Carlsen joined Mamedyarov and Giri in the lead. The Dutchman didn't lose his sense of humour as he tweeted: 'The World Champion is now officially a full piece stronger than the rest of mankind.'

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

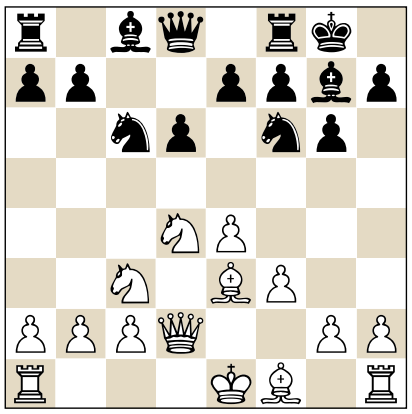
Magnus Carlsen
Gawain Jones
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (8)
Sicilian Defence, Dragon Variation

1.e4 c5 A slight surprise, since recently Gawain Jones had preferred the indeed more solid 1...e5. But as these days publicity is what matters – even Nakamura played the Dragon in order to get in a funny tweet – why wouldn't Jones use this opportunity on stage vs. the World Champion to advertise his two books on the subject?

2.♘f3 d6 3.d4!?

Somewhat impractical, as one could argue that Magnus would be an even bigger favourite in this game if he eschewed the theoretical battle with a random move like 3.♗b5+. But then again, that would indeed have been predictable.

3...cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♕d2 0-0



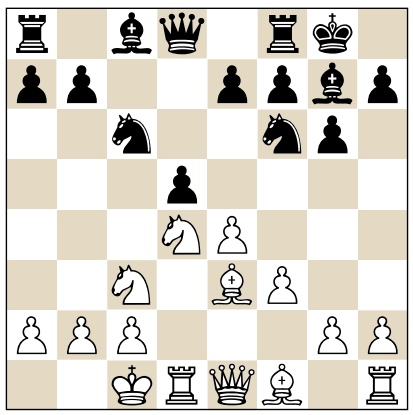
9.0-0-0

A few years back, when Magnus himself played the Dragon as Black, 9.♗c4 was the line he was most tested in. But Peter Leko played this move against him in their match in Miskolc in 2008.

9...d5 10.♕e1!?

This was the pet line that Leko used to get opening advantages, but no wins, against Magnus in the match, but later both did collect the full point against Lawrence Trent at the Isle of Man in 2016.

'Even more interesting was to hear online spectators speculating that Magnus was inspired by the sensational attacking games of AlphaZero.'



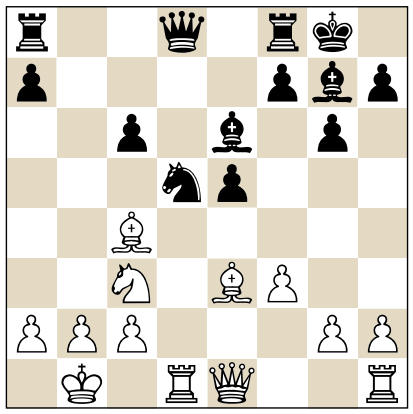
10...e5

On my own repertoire DVD (2013), I recommended 10...e6 for Black, but since then White has found improvements, and in his book (2015) Jones rightfully prefers 10...e5.

11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 ♘xd5

Against Leko, Magnus took with the c-pawn, but after 12...cxd5 13.♗g5 ♗e6 14.♗c4 it has now been established that Black just suffers, which the games in this line illustrate well.

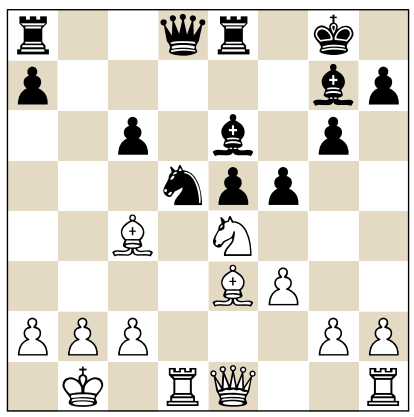
13.♗c4 ♗e6 14.♔b1!?



In particular two games by Wei Yi in 2013 made this move popular, because Black just seemed to have a hard time. In his book, Jones recommends 14...♖b8, which shortly after this game was in fact played in Gibraltar against Duda. Gawain, however, cunningly deviated from his own recommendation and clearly took the World Champion by surprise, since he now started spending considerable amounts of time on his next moves.

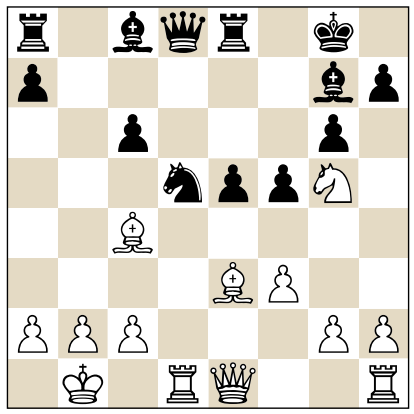
14...♖e8!? 15.♘e4 f5!

A strong novelty.



16.♘g5 ♗c8!

This is the point. Surprisingly, there is no way White can really exploit Black's loss of time. The computers indicate the logical 17.h4, but conclude that after 17...♖b8!? – voluntarily sacrificing the a7-pawn – Black has sufficient counterplay: 18.♗b3 h6 19.c4 hxg5 20.cxd5 ♖xb3!. This is the principal line. From a practical point of view, it is tempting for White to try and find a move that might push Black out of his preparation and force a 'man vs. man' combat, and after a few minutes Magnus lashed out with:



17.g4??

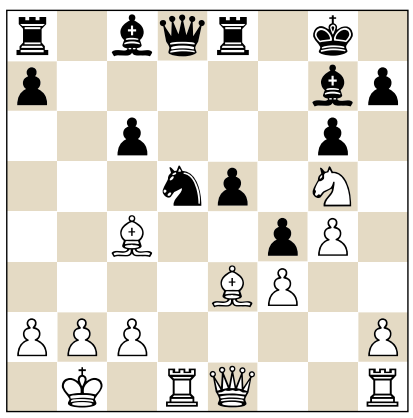
In itself logical, since after 17...h6 18.♘e4 you might ask why it wouldn't be better for White to immediately

threaten to open the g-file? However, instead of the text, 17.h4 was not only more aggressive; it would also have the advantage of protecting the knight on g5. This explains why after:

17...f4! ... the shocking reality was that Black was winning a piece! In an interview after the game, Magnus admitted that he had simply blundered. As if we didn't know. A possible refutation of his 'idea' could be that after 18.♗xf4 exf4 19.♖xd5 cxd5! (but not 19...♖xe1+ 20.♖d1+!) 20.♗xd5+ ♕xd5 21.♕xe8+ ♗f8 is sufficient, since Black's queen covers the f7-square and therefore leaves White with no effective follow-up. Even more interesting was to hear online spectators speculating that Magnus was inspired by the sensational attacking games of AlphaZero, in which material considerations seemed to be of less importance to artificial intelligence than it had always been to humans. But right now that's quite a stretch: Black is just a piece up and resignation would in principle be a viable option for White. But as the World Champion stated in the post-game interview, the psychological situation had completely changed. White has indeed lost a piece, but also any kind of expectations for a result, whereas for Jones obviously the reverse must have been true. All the pressure was now on the Englishman.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

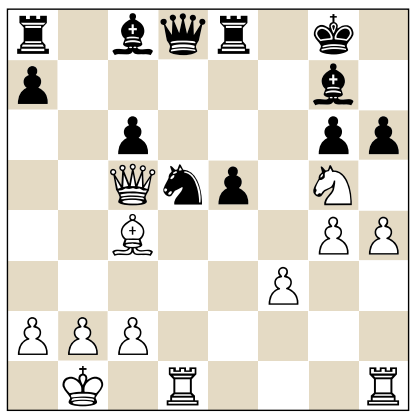
Magnus Carlsen and Gawain Jones have no idea that the Norwegian will blunder a piece on move 17 and nevertheless claim the full point 25 moves later.



18.h4!?

Fischer had a point, after all. It's all about h4-h5 and mate against the Dragon!

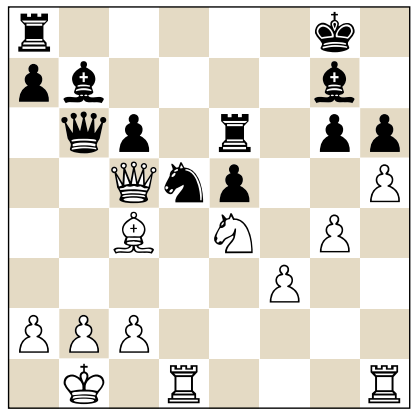
18...fxe3 19.♕xe3 h6 20.♕c5



20...♗b7! Objectively the strongest move, but 20...hxg5 was worth considering. White gets back one piece with some interest after 21.♕xc6 ♗e6 22.♗xd5 ♗xd5 23.♖xd5, but while after 23...♕b6 24.♕c4 ♕e6! the position is less advantageous according to the engine's evaluation, this should be more than enough to win the game, since 25.hxg5 e4 brings Black's Dragon bishop to life, which is, after all, an extra piece!

21.♘e4 ♖e6 22.h5 ♕b6?

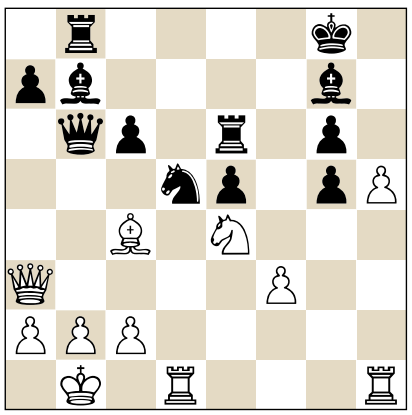
Somewhat understandably, Gawain wants to exchange the queens, and he puts his on a logical square, from where it's eyeing the b-pawn on the open b-file. However, 22...g5! would effectively have shut down White's counterplay on the kingside. And while it does weaken the f5-square and the light squares in general, White's compensation is not nearly enough for the piece. Now, however, we get:



23.g5! Norwegian Grandmaster Johan Salomon was spot-on here, when he tweeted that things have turned around 180 degrees and predicted a white win, while the engines still show that Black is safely winning. Black is still a piece up, but he has gone from having the kingside under control, to chaos. The primary problem, of course, is that 23...♕xc5, while it does exchange the queens, loses material immediately after 24.♘xc5, since 24...♖e7 25.♘xb7 ♖xb7 26.♖xd5! wins.

23...hxg5? 23...♗f8! would have prevented White's next move, and while 24.♕g1! ♕xg1 25.♖dxg1 still is a decent initiative for White, the lack of queens does make a noticeable difference.

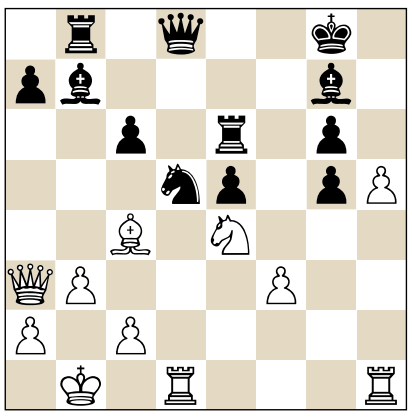
24.♕a3 ♖b8



25.b3! A great move. Sure, it blocks White's queen from the third rank, but the queen can be rerouted via c1 if necessary, and now it's all about king safety. Black's king will be exposed, while in the process White, after having removed the weakness of b2, will not be bothered in the slightest by a black counterattack. Stockfish, despite the piece deficit, already gives a 0.00 evaluation, indicating equality, but I am sure that if AlphaZero was not busy with new important research projects, it would tell us that White is already winning, since his long-term initiative is unstoppable.

25...♕d8

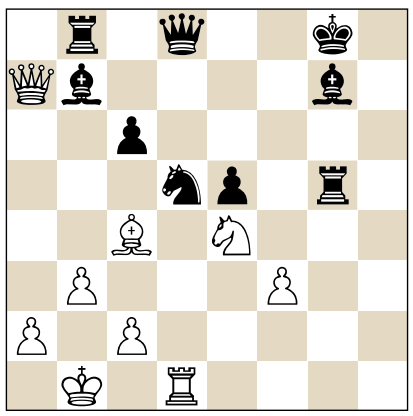
Technically speaking, the losing move. 25...gxh5 or 25...g4 offered better chances.



26.♕xa7!

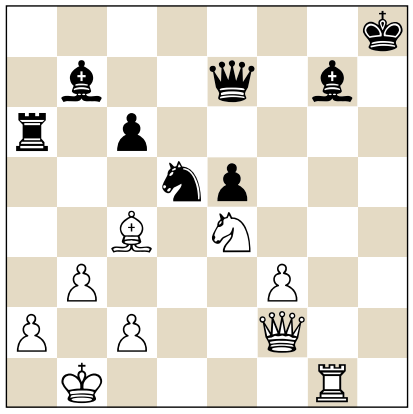
It's not so much the pawn, but rather the attack along the seventh rank that matters. Moreover, the queen can also go to g1 in order to attack along the g-file if need be.

26...gxh5 27.♖xh5 ♖g6 28.♖xg5 ♖xg5



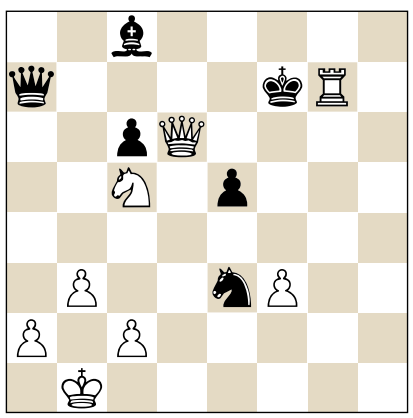
29.♘xg5 Exploiting the fact that the rook on b8 is unprotected if Black takes the knight on g5.

29...♕c8 30.♖g1 ♖a8 31.♕b6 ♖a6 32.♕c5 ♕d7 33.♘e4 ♔h8 34.♕f2 ♕e7



35.♗xa6 A direct attack also would have decided the game, but almost with a touch of irony, Magnus gets materialistic in the end.

35...♗xa6 36.♕h2+ ♔g8 37.♕h6 ♕a7 38.♕e6+ ♔f8 39.♖g5 ♘e3 40.♕d6+ ♔f7 41.♘c5 ♗c8 42.♖xg7+



And as 42...♔xg7 43.♕xe5+, followed by 44.♕xe3, leaves White a healthy three pawns up, Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

With five rounds to go, it was way too early to say who had the best chances, but the remaining programme didn't look unfavourable for the local favourite. In Round 9, Giri reignited the hopes of his fans when he scored the only win of the day and took the sole lead. While Anand made a draw with Carlsen and Mamedyarov had the same result against Kramnik, Giri

'Almost with a touch of irony, Magnus gets materialistic in the end.'

defeated Maxim Matlakov. Playing with the black pieces he managed to keep the game going and kept asking questions. Under pressure, the Russian started using lots of time, and when he lost control, he invited disaster.

Giri enjoyed the sole lead for only one day, because his closest rivals caught up with him in the next round. As in the past years, there were two 'Chess on Tour' days. Round 5 took the players to Hilversum, the capital of Dutch radio and television. For Round 10, they travelled to the north of the Netherlands, to Groningen, a city with a rich chess tradition. The venue was the stately Academy Building, where 3,000 visitors came to watch the games and indulge in all kinds of chess activities. While Giri's draw against Karjakin was one of the quicker games of the day, Carlsen worked till late at night to defeat So, whose rook and bishop proved no match for his opponent's rook and four pawns. But the shortest game of the day was Mamedyarov's demolition of Peter Svidler with the black pieces.

NOTES BY
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

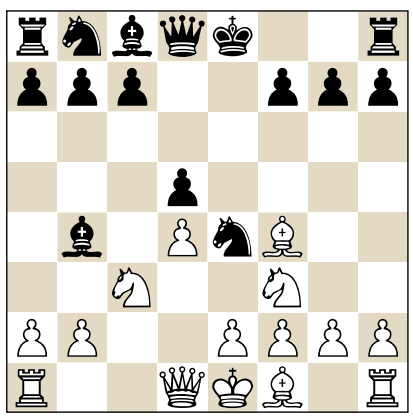
Peter Svidler
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (10)
Queen's Gambit Declined,
Ragozin Variation

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.d4 ♗b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗f4

Of course, I had seen Peter Svidler's game against Hou Yifan in Round 5, which featured this line, and I had prepared an interesting and tricky idea, which I thought was quite playable. Fortunately for me, my opponent didn't know it and ended up in a worse position.

6...♘e4

This move deviates from the main line, which continues with 6...0-0, which was played by Hou Yifan.



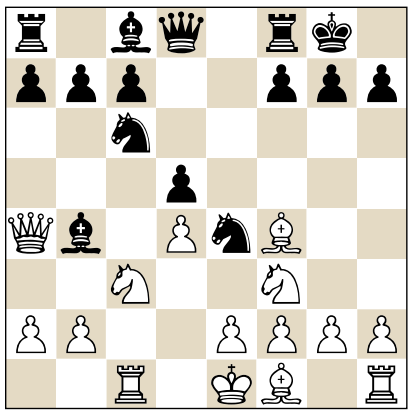
7.♕a4+?!

Here I believe that 7.♖c1 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 is the main continuation, when after, for example, 8...g5 9.♗e3 f5 10.g3 0-0 11.h4 f4 12.gxf4 gxf4 13.♗d2 the position is very complicated.

An interesting try would be 7.♘d2!?, but I do not think that White would have enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn after 7...♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♗xc3 9.♖c1 ♗a5 (9...♗xd4? is bad because of 10.♕a4+ ♘c6 11.♖xc6) 10.e3 c6 11.♗d3 ♘d7 12.0-0 ♘f6.

7...♘c6 8.♖c1

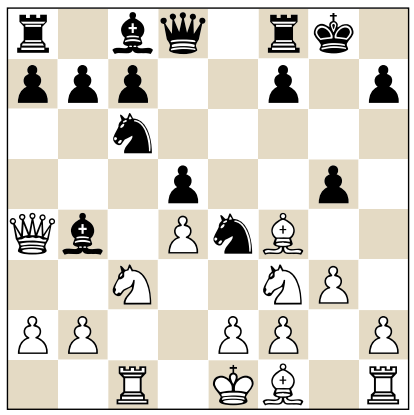
After 8.♗d2 ♘xd2 9.♘xd2 ♗d7 10.♖c1 Black plays 10...a5!, and White's pawn on d4 falls. After 11.♕b3 ♘xd4 12.♕xd5 ♘e6 Black has a pleasant advantage thanks to the bishop pair. **8...0-0**



9.g3? This is a mistake. Also bad would have been 9.a3? ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 g5 11.♗d2 (11.♗e3 f5) 11...♕e7 12.e3 g4, with a fantastic position for Black. 9.h3!? was an interesting try to put the bishop on h2. I couldn't find any forced advantage here for Black, but of course Black has interesting play and good compensation in this line: 9...g5 10.♗h2 f5 11.e3 g4 (11...f4 is also possible) 12.♘d2 g3 13.♗xg3 ♘xg3 14.fxg3 ♗d6 15.♘xd5 ♔h8.

But the best idea was 9.h4!. It is not easy to play such a move over the board, because White is weakening the g4-square, but in any case the most important thing was to stop Black from playing ...g7-g5. The play might continue 9...♗f5 (9...h6 is also an idea) 10.e3 a6 11.♘e5, and this is a tricky and playable position for both sides. For instance: 11...♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♗d6 13.♘d3! (better than 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6) 13...b5 14.♕d1 ♖e8.

9...g5!



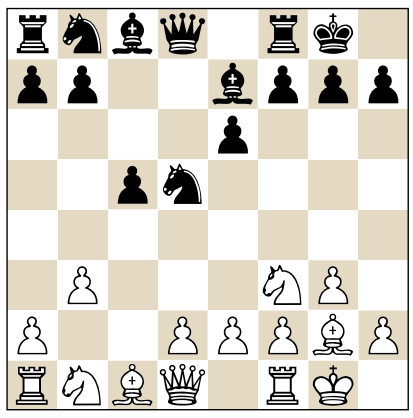
MARIA EMELIANOVA

Peter Svidler searches to improve his play after he has lost terribly in a mere 21 moves. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov listens politely, happy that he is back in the shared lead again.

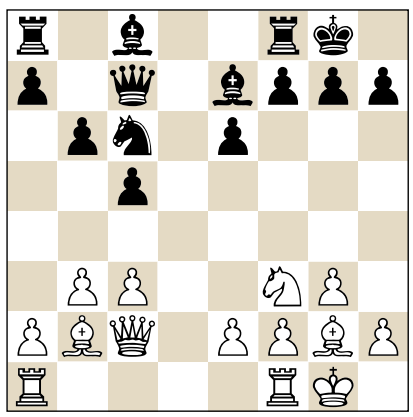
NOTES BY
Sergey Karjakin

Sergey Karjakin
Vladimir Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (11)
Réti Opening

In this game I simply wanted to engage in a battle, without a lot of theory.
1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 c5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5

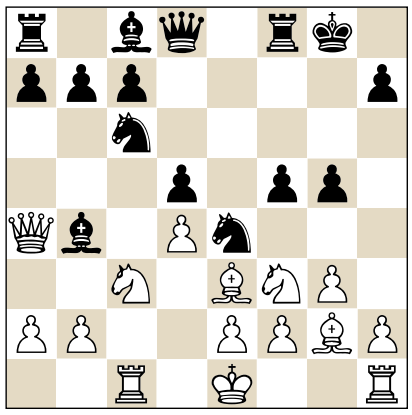


8.♘c3 A rare move. **8...♘c6 9.♗b2 ♘xc3** A possible solution, but 9...♗f6 was also not bad. **10.dxc3 ♕c7 11.♕c2!?** After 11.c4 b6 12.♕c2 ♗b7 it is doubtful whether White has any advantage.
11...b6 Interesting was 11...e5 12.c4 ♗e6 13.♖ad1 ♖ad8 14.♕b1, when the position is close to equal, but in contrast to the variation from the previous note it is not absolutely symmetrical.

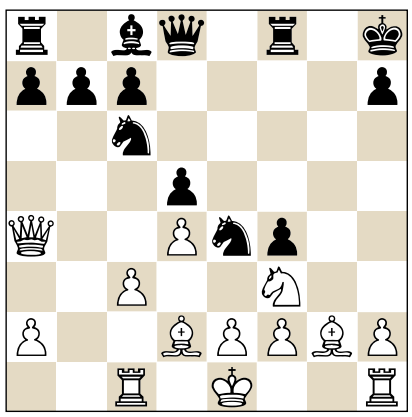


12.♗c1!?
I liked this manoeuvre, although it does not promise anything special. 12.c4 ♗b7 again leads to a symmet-

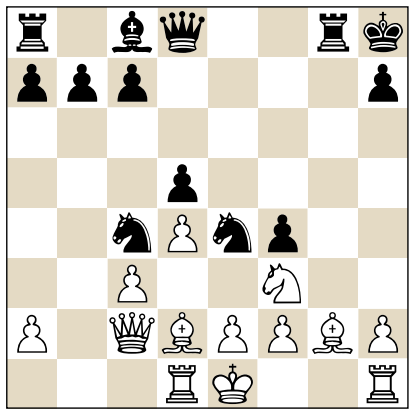
Starting from here, I felt that my position was already better and very pleasant to play.
10.♗e3
After 10.♗d2, Black can prepare a very nice sacrifice: 10...♖e8! 11.♗g2 g4! 12.♘e5 ♖xe5! 13.dxe5 ♘xd2 14.♔xd2 d4 15.♔e1 dxc3 16.bxc3 ♗f8, and Black should be winning.
10...f5 11.♗g2



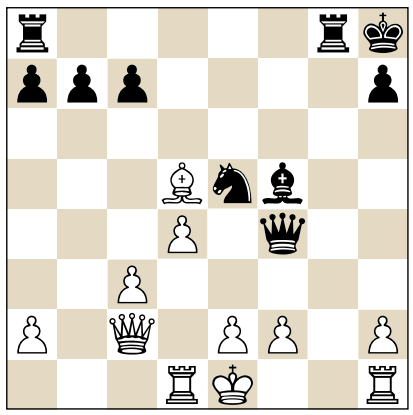
I thought this was the critical moment in the game. I calculated and was very happy with my position when I played:
11...f4 12.gxf4 ♗xc3+!
In case of 12...gxf4?, White retains some chances after 13.♗d2 ♘xd2 14.♘xd2.
13.bxc3 gxf4 14.♗d2 ♔h8!
A very strong prophylactic move, which makes Black's advantage a very large one. To be honest, after this move I couldn't find any way for White to defend his position.



15.♕b3?? 15.h4 was the last practical chance for White, although I think that after 15...♗g4 Black would be very close to winning.
Also 15.♖g1 ♗e6 would have been more resilient.
15...♘a5! Peter had missed this simple resource, after which Black completely dominates and is winning.
16.♕c2 ♘c4 17.♖d1 ♖g8



18.♘e5 Also hopeless was 18.♖g1 ♗h3! 19.♗xh3 ♖xg1+ 20.♘xg1 ♕h4! or 18.♗f1 ♗f5.
18...♘xe5 19.♗xe4 ♕g5!
Black simply has too many threats.
20.♗xf4 ♕xf4 21.♗xd5 ♗f5



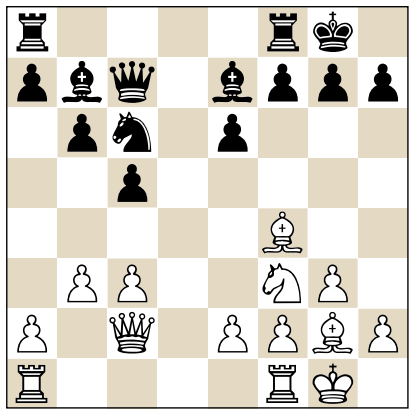
Now, after 22.e3, 22...♕f3 would be a killer, and if the white queen moves, ...♘g4 decides the issue. White resigned.

Candidates

Five of the eight participants in the Berlin Candidates were in Wijk aan Zee, and inevitably everyone was curious to see how they would do in this final test. As said, Kramnik was not unhappy about his play, although he stressed that he will have to be more stable if he wants to become Carlsen's challenger: 'It will be difficult to win the Candidates if you have two, three really bad days.' Perhaps the most stable performance was shown by Sergey Karjakin, who never was in any danger and seemingly effortlessly reached plus-2. One of his finest efforts was his duel in Round 11 with Kramnik, as always a matter of prestige.

rical structure. The play could have been complicated by the interesting move 12.b4!?, although after 12...♗b7 13.b5 ♘a5 14.c4 ♖ad8 the assessment of the position is not so clear.

12...♗b7 13.♗f4



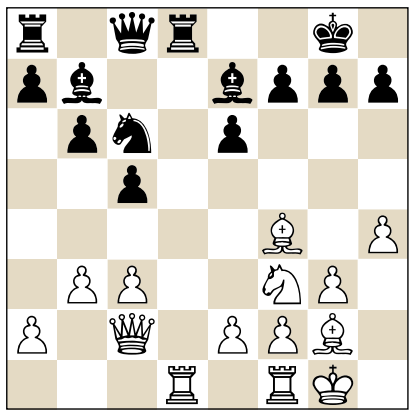
13...♕c8

A slightly passive decision. Understandably, after 13...♗d6 Black was concerned about 14.♘g5, provoking the weakening 14...g6. Indeed, Black has to play accurately. After 15.♗xd6 ♕xd6 16.♖ad1 ♕e7! his position looks slightly inferior, but with accurate play he will most probably equalize after 17.h4 ♖ad8.

By contrast, in the event of the incautious 16...♕c7? 17.♕e4! in view of the threat of 18.♕h4 Black unexpectedly finds himself in a difficult position, and the computer considers it best simply to give up a pawn – 17...♔g7 18.♕xe6!.

14.♖ad1 ♖d8 Possibly better here was 14...f6!?, covering the squares e5 and g5, and in some cases intending ...♘d8-f7. White retains some initiative, for example after 15.h4!?.

15.h4



A useful move in many respects.

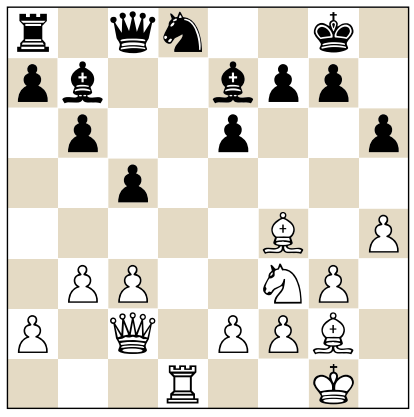
MARIA EMELIANOVA

Warming up for the Candidates, Sergey Karjakin seemingly effortlessly reached plus-2. One of his finest efforts was his win against fellow-Candidate Vladimir Kramnik.

15...h6 Here also 15...f6!? deserved attention, in reply to which 16.♗h3 was possible.

16.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 If 16...♕xd8, then 17.♖d1 ♕e8 18.♘e5 ♖d8 19.♖xd8 is possible, with a slight advantage for White, since if 19...♗xd8 there is 20.♘c4, and in the event of 19...♘xd8 20.♗xb7 ♘xb7 the black knight on b7 is not very well placed.

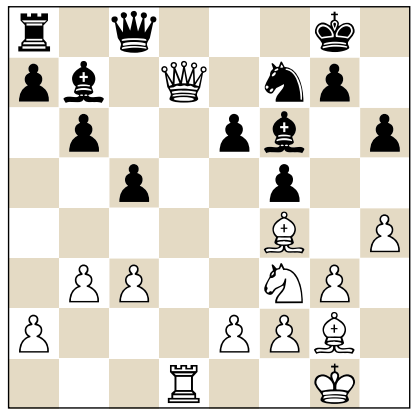
17.♖d1



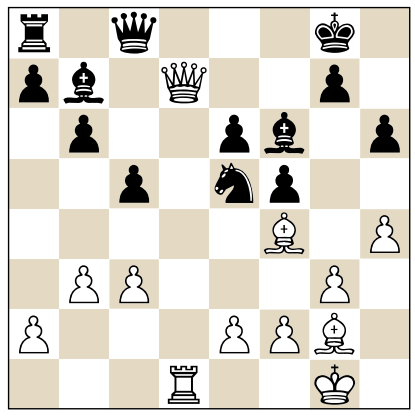
17...f5?! Black tries to regroup his pieces, but this allows White time to invade on the 7th rank.

The patient 17...♘c6 was better, when nothing serious for Black has yet occurred.

18.♕d2! ♘f7 19.♕d7 ♗f6



20.♘e5! An important tactical nuance. **20...♘xe5** 20...♕xd7 21.♘xd7! ♗xg2 22.♘xf6+ gxf6 23.♔xg2 is bad for Black.

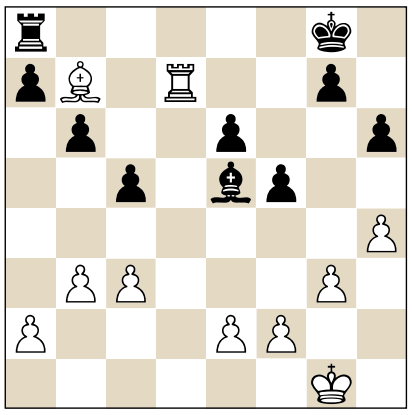


21.♗xe5!

It was important not to be tempted by the advantage of the two bishops –

21.♕xb7 ♕xb7 22.♗xb7, which after 22...♖e8 23.h5 ♔f7 would have hardly given White anything. By contrast, in the ending with opposite-coloured bishops and rooks White has good winning chances.

21...♗xe5 22.♗xb7 ♕xd7 23.♖xd7



23...♖e8?!

23...♖f8! was better, although even here, after the possible 24.♖e7 ♖f6 25.♗c8!? ♗xc3 26.h5 one can confidently place a ± assessment.

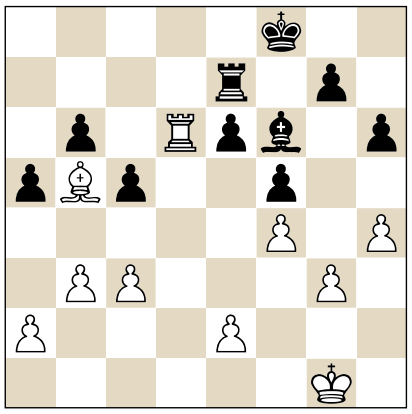
24.♗c6! a5 25.♗b5

After this bishop manoeuvre Black's position is difficult, but it was probably better for him not to allow the fixing of the kingside pawns, by playing ...g7-g6.

25...♔f8? 26.f4! ♗f6

26...♗xc3? loses to 27.♖d3.

27.♖d6 ♖e7



28.h5!

Before capturing on b6 White strengthens his position to the maximum. The c3-pawn does not play any role; on the contrary, by moving to c4 it would merely restrict the light-squared bishop. I think that already here the position can be assessed as technically won for White, in view of the difference in the activity of the pieces and the weakness of the e6- and f5-pawns.

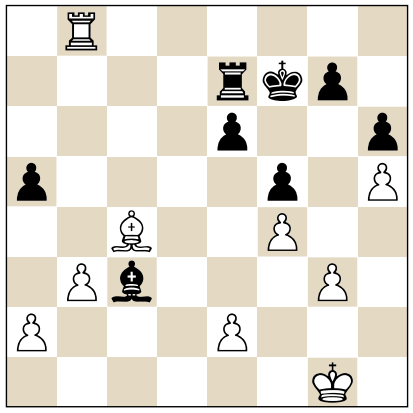
The over-hasty 28.♖xb6?! g6! would have allowed Black good chances of a successful defence.

28...♗xc3 29.♖xb6 c4

This attempt to give up a pawn is Black's only active idea and his best practical chance.

It is important that 29...e5?? 30.♖b8+ ♔f7 31.♗c4+ does not work. And in the event of, say, 29...♔f7? 30.♗c4 ♔f6 31.♔g2 White plays ♔f3 and g4, then after the exchange of pawns he plays e4 and e5, transfers his king to e4 and advances f5.

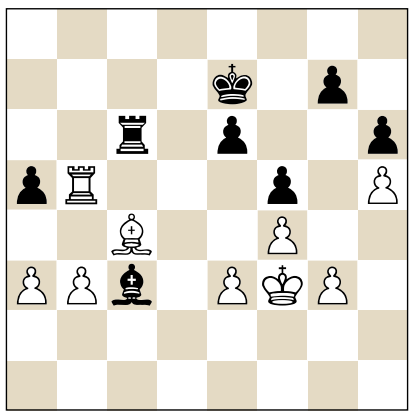
30.♖b8+ ♔f7 31.♗xc4



31...♖d7

The endgame after 31...g6! 32.♖b5 ♔f6 33.hxg6 ♔xg6 34.♔g2 should be won for White, but this was the best chance. Now White wins by unhurriedly strengthening his position.

32.♔g2 ♔e7 33.♔f3 ♖d1 34.♖b7+ ♖d7 35.♖b5 ♖d1 36.a3 ♖f1+ 37.♔g2 ♖d1 38.e3 ♖d6 39.♔f3 ♖c6



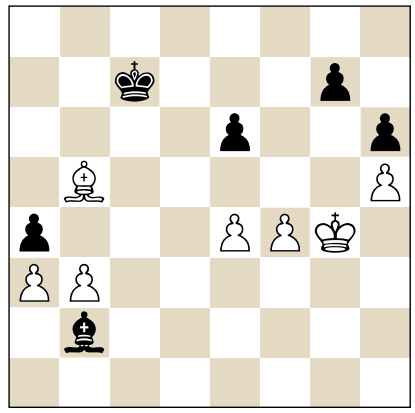
40.g4

Good enough for a win, although it was possible to defer this advance, by first transferring the rook to a7: 40.♖b7+!? ♔d8 41.♖a7 followed by g4.

40...fxg4+ 41.♔xg4 a4 42.♖b7+ ♔d8

Or 42...♔d6 43.e4 winning.

43.e4 ♗b2 44.♗b5 ♖c7 45.♖xc7 ♔xc7



On this occasion the pure opposite-coloured bishops ending is easily won.

46.bxa4 ♗c3 47.e5 ♔d8 48.♔f3 ♗d2 49.♔e4 ♔e7 50.f5 exf5+ 51.♔xf5 ♗c1 52.a5 ♗xa3 53.a6 ♗c5 54.♔e4 ♔e6 55.♗c4+ ♔d7 56.♔d5 ♗f2 57.e6+ ♔c7 58.♗b5 ♗h4 59.a7

Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Round 12, the last round but one, had barely begun when Mamedyarov, as Black, resigned himself to a draw against bottom seed Gawain Jones after a mere 12 moves: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.c4 ♘c6 6.♘c3 ♘xc3 7.dxc3 g6 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.♗h6 ♗f8 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗h6 ♗f8 12.♗g5 ½-½.

Mamedyarov's decision to almost voluntarily drop out of the race for first place was hard to understand, and the annoyance he expressed towards his opponent's repetition of moves was also a bit puzzling. Jones had a point when he countered that he didn't feel that it was up to him to avoid the repetition and Black could have continued playing by meeting ♗g5 with ...f6. Mamedyarov left

quickly, leaving everyone guessing. Still, it was clear to everyone that he had ruined his chances to win one of the most prestigious tournaments in the world.

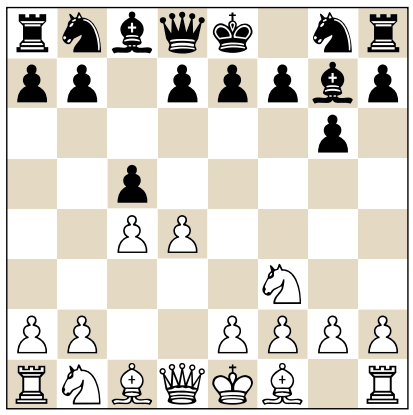
Indeed, his rivals didn't fail to exploit his rash decision. Carlsen once again proved what an incredible endgame player he is, as he slowly but surely outplayed Matlakov in an opposite-coloured bishop ending in which his extra pawn did matter in the end.

Giri didn't get much out of the opening against Adhiban, but showed deeper insight when the Indian went for a tactical skirmish.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Anish Giri
Adhiban Baskaran
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (12)
Modern Defence

1.c4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 c5!?



The King's Indian in itself could hardly have come as a surprise from a player as sharp as Adhiban, not to mention the fact that he had already played it earlier in the tournament. This move did, however. White has a choice: accept the invitation into the Benko-Volga complex, as I did, or try and maintain the status quo with 4.e4.

4.d5 4.e4 could lead to an Accelerated Dragon Maroczy Bind after 4...cxd4, but Black also has other options, some of which make more sense than others.

4...d6

4...b5 could transpose to the main lines of the Volga Gambit, but both sides have some options along the way due to the fact that Black has not developed his knight to f6 yet.

5.e4 e6 6.♗d3!?

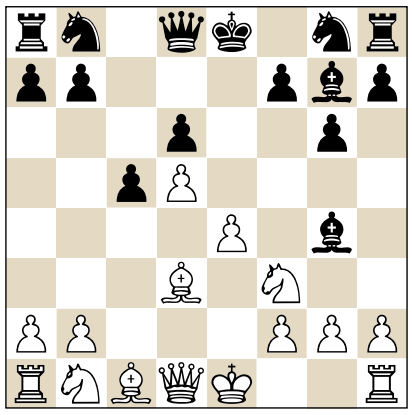
Trying to be clever. I had seen the idea of keeping the knight on b1, which sometimes makes sense, since the ideal square for this knight in the Benoni is most likely going to be c4, which it can reach via d2.

6.♘c3 could lead to a regular Benoni if Black decides not to develop the knight to e7, which he may very well consider.

6...exd5 7.cxd5 7.exd5!? would have been easier to play for both sides, but I felt confident in a more strategically complicated situation.

7...♗g4!?

This looks interesting, yet it felt somewhat premature.



8.♘bd2?!

Frankly speaking, I consider myself to be pretty educated when it comes to Benoni structures, having played and studied them throughout my career in all kinds of different variations with both colours. Yet, right now I am rather embarrassed to see how talentlessly I treated the opening of this game. The 'pseudo'-natural ♘bd2xf3 idea is great in, for example, the Sicilian Rossolimo or any kind of 1.e4 e5 openings, but is totally harmless in this particular position. It would have been better to give up all attempts at cleverness and just

Celeb 64

John Henderson

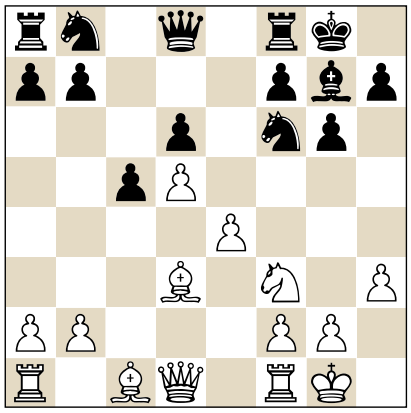
Hugh Laurie

Hugh Laurie is everybody's idea of the feather-brained Englishman, a bumbling Wooster to Stephen Fry's ice-cool Jeeves. But their first partnership was not comedic but chessic, and shown in a grainy black and white photo of the two deeply engrossed over the chessboard in one of their many chess battles in Fry's university rooms at Cambridge in 1980. Though the two later broke through with their partnership in 'Jeeves and Wooster', and then the eponymous hit sketch show 'A Bit of Fry and Laurie', Hugh Laurie may be more recognisable to younger viewers in 'House', where his portrayal of Dr Gregory House brought international recognition and acclaim as the prickly genius in the multi-award winning US medical drama series. Between filming, Laurie was often seen playing chess, either taking on all comers or solving a problem – and so impressed were the scriptwriters by Laurie's prowess, that they incorporated chess into an episode. That was in series three, 'The Jerk', with the mysterious illness of a mean-spirited 16-year-old chess prodigy who collapses after losing control and beating up a fellow teen he had just defeated in a tournament.
'It's a real thin line between tortured genius and awkward kid who can't get girls because he's creepy', mused the good doctor of his patient, Nate. And then over a game of chess with Nate, House diagnosed his anti-social tendencies with juvenile hemochromatosis, just by the unusual way he held his pieces. ■

castle short and eventually recapture on f3 with the queen.

8.♕a4+!? is the most critical way to try and punish Black's provocative play. Black is at a crossroads here: 8...♘d7! (8...♗d7 9.♕b3 ♕b6 didn't look too bad for Black either, but he has a bad endgame after the elegant 10.♘a3!?) 9.♘fd2. I refused to calculate this variation any further, and I am glad my intuition didn't let me down: 9...♘h6!? 10.h3 ♕h4 11.♖f1 ♗h5 12.♘c4 ♔e7!!. This is complete chaos, and even the strongest engines are struggling to nail the exact assessment.

8...♘f6 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♘xf3



11...c4

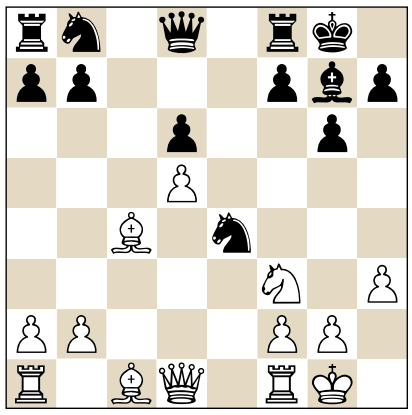
Very natural and fine, but apparently it was even simpler to develop the knight first. Only here did I start taking the opening of this game seriously, and I quickly realized that I was a bit late doing it. Nonetheless, the natural moves had to be made.

So, even simpler was 11...♘bd7! (now ♖e1 is always met by ...♖e8, otherwise Black follows up with ...c4!) 12.♗f4 c4! 13.♗xc4 ♘xe4, with complete equality. But 12.♗f4 is naive; at the very least it's better to start with 12.♗g5 in order to provoke ...h6, although I still don't see a way for White to get any opening advantage.

12.♗xc4

12.♗c2 is too ambitious. After 12...♘a6 Black has very easy Benoni play. I tried to make some ♗e3-d4 work in order to neutralize the monstrous g7-bishop, but then realized 12...♖e8 13.♖e1 ♘a6 is even more accurate, when Black is more than comfortable and the aforementioned bishop manoeuvre is no longer possible.

12...♘xe4



All Black now has to do to equalize comfortably is to develop the b8-knight to d7. White's only hope is the fact that he is to move, so he can try and do something to prevent this.

13.♖e1 ♖e8

13...♘f6 would be fine as well, if not for 14.♗f4!, preventing ...♘bd7.

14.♕c2

Again, I didn't see a clear follow-up yet, but this move also has to be played anyway.

14...♘f6 15.♖xe8+

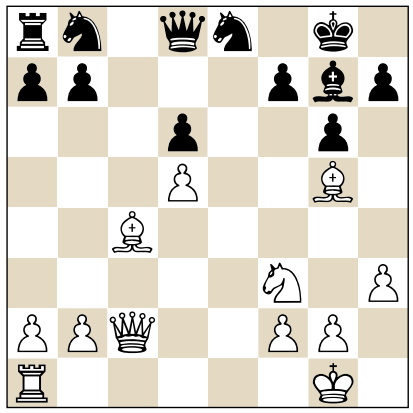
Again, the only way to keep that one-move initiative going. ...♘bd7 must not be allowed.

The first instinct is 15.♗f4, but this just doesn't serve the purpose: 15...♘bd7!, and now it turns out that 16.♗xd6 even loses a piece after 16...♖c8!, when both ...b5 and ...♘b6 are unstoppable. Note that ♖xe8 is always met by ...♘xe8!.

15...♘xe8 16.♗g5!

I spent a little too much time here, trying to find a way to cause Black problems after 16...♗f6. Immediately after playing this move I realized I should have done so faster, since the move I had spent all my time on is not the only one. Indeed, Adhiban quickly played one of the alternatives.

16.♕b3!? was the only other way to try and disrupt Black's development, but I couldn't quite find a way to consolidate any advantage after 16...♕b6! 17.♕xb6 axb6, and my analysis confirms my initial assessment: Black will get enough counterplay to compensate for his damaged pawn-structure.



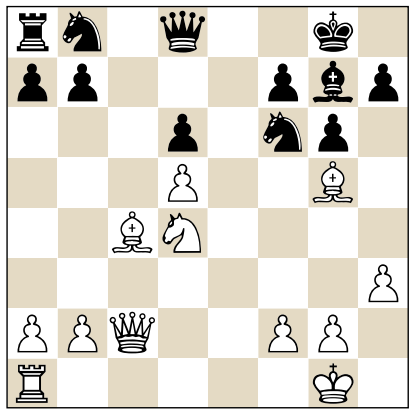
16...♘f6

I had planned to meet 16...♗f6 with 17.h4!?, which is clever, but not too dangerous. 17.♕b3!, instead, does work: 17...♗xg5 18.♘xg5 ♕xg5?. I had dismissed this variation on account of this capture, the point being that 19.♕xb7 is met by 19...♕d8! and 20.♕xa8 by 20...♕b6!, when it is White who has to think about survival. Instead, from afar I missed a deep and spectacular idea: 20.♗b5!! ♘c7 21.♖c1!, and White regains the piece and keeps the extra pawn for free.

16...♕c7!? is hard to consider, but once this move is actually executed, it becomes clear that it is probably the cleanest one of them all. I don't see what can be done against ...♘d7.

17.♘d4!

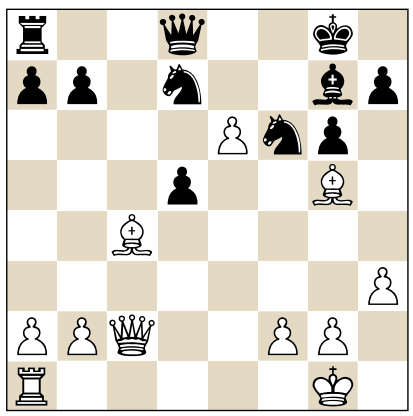
Practically the most unpleasant choice. Here I started liking the way this game was unfolding; but it is still too early to get over-excited.



17...♕b6?

This is based on a miscalculation. Black must have missed my 19th

move. At the same time, it was not easy to find a way to finally prepare the development of the b8-knight. After 17...♘bd7 18.♘e6! is bad news. Giving up the g7-bishop is simply bad, while accepting the sacrifice only leads to trouble: 18...fxe6 19.dxe6 d5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

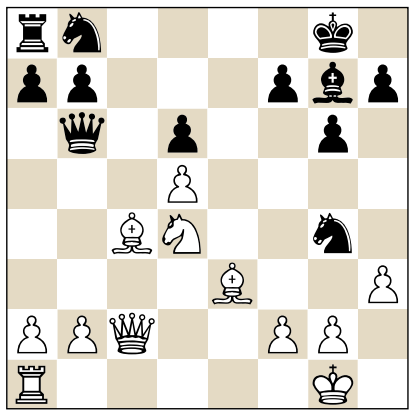
and here White has two ways to continue:
– 20.♗xd5! ♘b6 21.♗b3!? is the most elegant: 21...♕e7 22.♖d1 ♔h8 23.♖d4!?, and White dominates. The queen goes to d2, after which a4-a5! is a nasty idea to face.
– 20.exd7 is clearer, but I wasn't sure if it was killing: 20...dxc4 21.♕xc4+ ♔h8 22.♖d1, and now Black seems to have a strong defence: 22...♕f8!! (preparing ...♖d8) 23.♕e6 h6 24.♗h4 ♖d8 25.♖d6 g5 26.♗g3 ♕g8 27.♕e7 ♖xd7 28.♖xd7 ♘xd7 29.♕xd7 ♗xb2, and Black has kind of escaped.
17...a6 requires nerves of steel and a deep understanding of the position. It turns out that this useful waiting move may be the best Black can do. White has to find a way to exploit his lead in development: 18.♖c1! is probably strongest, when 18...♘bd7 is again met by 19.♘e6!, so Black has to be more clever about things here: 18...♕e8!? 19.♕b3 b5 20.♗f1 ♘bd7 21.♘c6, and I believe White keeps some initiative.
17...♕c8!? is perhaps the most human: 18.♘b5 ♘e8 19.♗f4 ♘d7! 20.♖c1 ♘b6 21.♗b3 ♕d8 and Black eventually crawls out, although the ...♘f6-♘e8-♘f6-♘e8 sequence requires strong character and an absence of shame.

NEW IN CHESS

Adhiban Baskaran could not repeat last year's excellent result. In his game against Anish Giri, a planned tactic met with a devastating rejoinder.

18.♗e3 'Falling' for it. If this move had really not worked, Black's idea of ...♕b6 would have been perfectly sensible.

18...♘g4



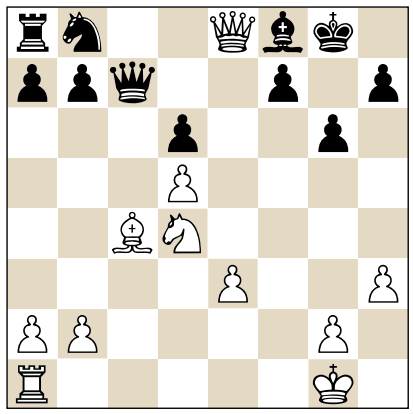
The point of Black's idea.

19.♕e4!

A very alluring move, in my humble opinion. The main variation that arises is pretty as hell as well.

19...♘f6!

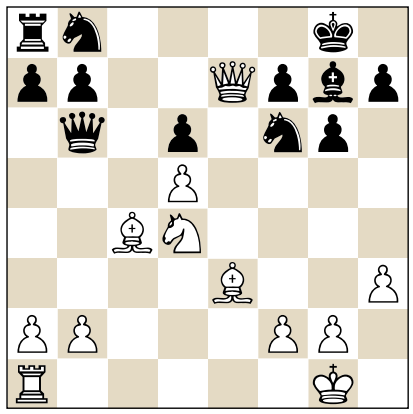
The strongest defence, unfortunately.
19...♘xe3 is obviously the natural follow-up, but here White has another trick up his sleeve: 20.♕e8+ ♗f8 21.fxe3.
This position is a good illustration of how positional rules can be broken for a higher purpose. Had the white queen been on, let's say, c2, Black would have had a huge strategic advantage after ...♘bd7-♘e5. But now he is simply unable to finish his development and exploit White's weaknesses: 21...♕c7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Threatening ...♕d7 as well as ...♕e7, and therefore forcing a queen trade. I was very much hoping for Black to go for this defence, since now comes the main point: 22.♘e6! fxe6 23.dxe6 ♕e7 24.♕c8, keeping the b8-knight and the a8-rook in check, and threatening the deadly ♖f1-f7. Black is dead lost.

20.♕e7!

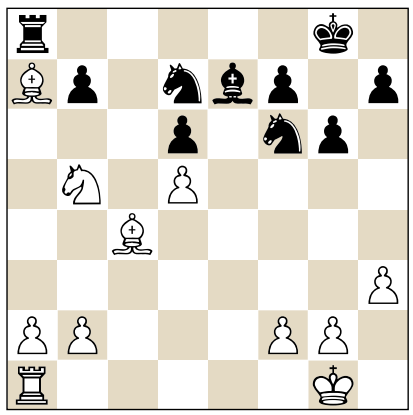


It's all forced now.

20...♘bd7 21.♘b5 ♗f8

The best defence and a creative one, too, but unfortunately for Black he loses a pawn at the end of the line.

22.♗xb6 ♗xe7 23.♗xa7



23...♘e5

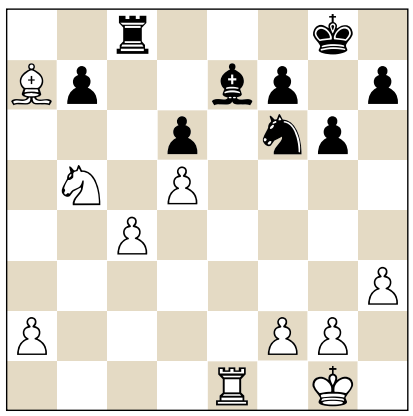
23...b6 was the most natural attempt to complicate matters. I calculated a long line here, starting with 24.a4 ♘e8 25.b4 ♗d8 26.♖c1 ♘c7 27.♘xc7 ♗xc7 28.♗b5 ♖xa7 29.♗xd7, with an endgame that was close to winning.

24.b3 This was my original intention. Then I noticed the tempting and 'clean' 24.♗b3, but when I saw that Black has 24...b6!? – when I would once again have to deal with the weird bishop on a7, which is semi-stuck – I decided to go for the clearer 24.b3, which I had already worked out while my opponent was contemplating his move.

24...♘xc4 25.bxc4 ♖c8 26.♖e1!

This is the point. White is now able to protect the c4-pawn thanks to some neat tactical motifs.

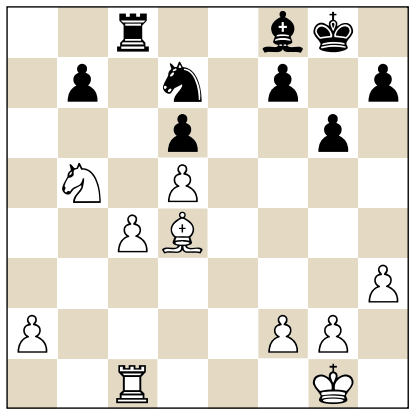
26.♖c1? ♘xd5! was the point of Black's defensive attempt.



26...♗f8 26...♔f8 was what I had been hoping for, when I wanted to execute the pretty 27.♗e3!, indirectly protecting the c4-pawn due to the threat of ♗h6+ ♔e8 ♘xd6+, while at the same time preparing ♖c1, since ...♘xd5 isn't working now because the rook is protected by the e3-bishop.

27.♗d4 Chasing the knight away from f6 in order to be able to protect the c4-pawn at last.

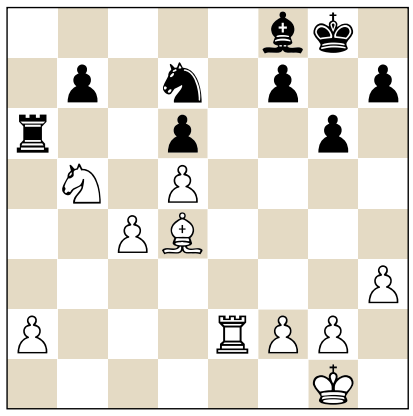
27...♘d7 28.♖c1



Now White has consolidated his extra pawn, and although his pawn structure is not all that impressive, it appears that Black's defensive hopes are pretty thin. The d7-knight is dominated by the d4-bishop, and the f8-bishop is stuck defending the d6-pawn attacked by the b5-knight. It is only a matter of time before White brings the king all the way over to the queenside in preparation for delivering a final technical blow.

28...♖a8 29.♖c2 ♖a6 Freeing the f8-bishop from the protection of the d6-pawn and preparing ...♗g7. I wasn't sure how much of a relief that would be for Black, but if you can stop a plan, why not do it?

30.♖e2!



30...♖a4?

The final error. 30...♖a8 would prolong the struggle, but since ...♗g7 is no longer an idea, I struggle to see what Black could do against White slowly bringing the king over and then getting ready to deliver the final blow. ...f5, ...♔f7 is a plan, but what's

Wijk aan Zee 2018 – Masters — cat. XX

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM NOR	2834	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	9	2884
2	Anish Giri	IGM NED	2752	½	*	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	9	2891
3	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM RUS	2787	0	½	*	½	1	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	½	8½	2857
4	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM AZE	2804	0	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	8½	2856
5	Vishy Anand	IGM IND	2767	½	½	0	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	8	2836
6	Wesley So	IGM USA	2792	½	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	8	2834
7	Sergey Karjakin	IGM RUS	2753	½	½	1	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	7½	2807
8	Peter Svidler	IGM RUS	2768	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	6	2719
9	Wei Yi	IGM CHN	2743	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	*	1	½	½	½	½	5½	2693
10	Gawain Jones	IGM ENG	2640	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	*	½	½	1	½	5	2671
11	Fabiano Caruana	IGM USA	2811	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	5	2658
12	Maxim Matlakov	IGM RUS	2718	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	1	5	2665
13	Adhiban Baskaran	IGM IND	2655	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	*	½	3½	2582
14	Hou Yifan	IGM CHN	2680	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	*	2½	2504

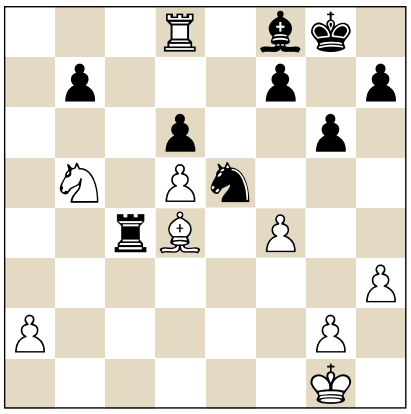
next is not clear either, not to mention that this would weaken the e6-square.

31.♖e8! Now White wins by force. In return for the pawn, White gets full access to the 8th rank, and I figured that the odds were good that White's utter domination would eventually win him a piece.

31...♖xc4 32.♖d8 ♘e5

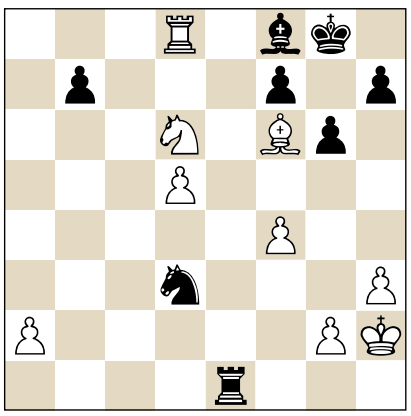
After 32...♖b4, 33.a4! is the key, and I guess that this is what Black had missed when going down this road.

33.f4 33.♗e3 ♔g7 34.♘xd6 is probably also enough to win, but the game move is a more powerful finisher.



33...♘d3 33...♖c1+ was another attempt to hang on, with the idea of defending the d6-pawn with the knight, but after 34.♔h2 ♘c4 35.♖c8 ♖b1 36.♘c3 ♖b4 37.♘e4 White wins the house by playing ♘f6+.

34.♗f6 ♖e4 35.♘xd6 ♖e1+ 36.♔h2



36...♘f2 36...♘xf4 will lose to many moves, the easiest one being 37.♘c8, threatening 38.♘e7+ and forcing Black to give up a full piece with 37...♘xd5 for no compensation whatsoever.

ALINA L'AMI

The top three finishers of the magnificent 80th edition of the Tata Steel Masters: Vladimir Kramnik (3), Magnus Carlsen (1) and Anish Giri (2).

37.♗g5 37...♔g7 is now met by 38.♘e8+. What follows was unnecessary. **37...h5 38.♗h6 h4 39.g4 ♔h7 40.♖xf8 ♘d3 41.♖xf7+ ♔h8 42.♖f8+** Black resigned.

'So close'

The final round followed a scenario that many had predicted. Anand, as Black, held Mamedyarov to a draw, Carlsen made an expected draw with Black against Karjakin, and Giri didn't get any real chances as Black against Wei Yi.

Which meant that for the first time in the history of Wijk aan Zee a blitz playoff was to decide on the winner. Traditionally, first prize was shared in case of more than one player finishing on top – in 1989 there were even four winners – but this rule was abolished last year, when no playoff was needed. since Wesley So was the sole winner.

It was a novelty that met with less enthusiasm now that the moment had arrived. Finally, for the first time since 1985, when Jan Timman won, a Dutchman topped the table, but Giri's chances in a playoff against Carlsen were not rated very highly (even though the statisticians were quick to point out that, in fact, their score against each other in blitz was equal). Carlsen had a perfect record as far as playoffs were concerned, and for many people the result was a foregone conclusion – which only added to the frustration of the Dutch fans, who felt that after 13 wonderful rounds of classical chess it was cruel that two blitz games, lasting less than half an hour in total, would decide.

But such were the new rules and that was what happened, including the expected outcome. In the first game, Giri kept the balance for a long time until a mistake allowed Carlsen to pounce. In the second game, he managed to create chances with a piece sacrifice, but Carlsen remained calm and when he agreed to a draw, he had already taken over.

In a first reaction, Giri admitted that the playoff had been a cold shower. Then, calling it his best tournament ever, he expressed his happiness about the chess he had shown. Carlsen was a gracious winner. He said it was huge for him to have become the record-holder in Wijk aan Zee with six wins. He also stated that, given the play he had shown, Giri had deserved to win. And finally he praised the Dutch fans for the composed way they took his victory, as they had been 'so close'. ■

SHORT

OBSOLESCENCE

I have grown so accustomed to being the most senior participant in tournaments these days that I prefer to ham it up and tell the credulous youth that I once played a match with Lasker. Unlike many of my other ripping yarns, this one happens to be true – if a tad misleading. The Lasker in question was Edward (born in 1885), and not his more famous distant cousin, Emanuel, who died in 1941, while my mother lay swaddled in her cot. And nor did I play *against* the grand old man himself, although he was a member of the opposing team. The occasion was the Lloyds Bank Trophy, a London-New York telex match, held on the 11th of September 1976, which was won with regrettable ease by our upstart, former colonial subjects, the Americans. I did, however, have the satisfaction of downing Joel Benjamin on a junior board, while Sir Stuart Milner Barry KCVO CB OBE – a whippersnapper of 70 – defeated his nonagenarian adversary.

Telex, for those who have not studied ancient history, was an exceedingly primitive means of electronic communication that fleetingly existed, although never thrived, before being supplanted by the fax – another piece of antiquated machinery. In what passed as technological sophistication back then, this method of transmission had all the speed of carrier pigeons, but minus the guano. To general ululation of the unfortunate partakers, there was a brief vogue within the British Chess Federation for supporting this type of competition. We apparently even entered a mini 'Telechess Olympiad', in 1981-2, which was won by the USSR. I say 'apparently' because, although involved, I had absolutely no idea it was an Olympiad until I began researching this article. I do recall my two games though. The English side of the match against Israel was held at Bank Leumi (appropriately enough, formerly known as the Anglo-Palestine Company) in London. Unfortunately, despite a formidably wearying 9-hour session, Balshan and I managed to make only a handful of moves before the game and those of three others were sent for adjudication! To this day, I do not know the final result. With no visible opponent and a glacial tempo, it did not make a compelling spectacle, to put it mildly – although, astonishingly, as many as sixty people showed up to witness our encounter versus the Russians. Once in a while, a volunteer relayer would emerge from the mysterious telex room with a new move to relieve the tedium. Even with the odd official observer to ensure fair play, opportunities for cheating were rife. Affairs were so dull that it was unreasonable to expect participators to remain mute throughout. Avoiding discussion of current positions with team-mates was thus a matter of personal integrity. Against the Soviets, I avoided both boredom and the injustice of adjudication only by being the first to lose – capitulating to a devastating sacrificial onslaught by the late, talented Viktor Kupreichik from Minsk. Nevertheless this 'brevity' took no less than four hours and forty minutes to complete.

Chess by telex was such a manifestly unsatisfactory means of conducting our beautiful game that it swiftly slipped, unlamented, into obsolescence. 'All things must pass', as the great Liverpudlian philosopher, George Harrison, once said. Clearly though, the former Beatle had never heard of competitive correspondence chess: if ever an activity should have long ago expired and been buried with dignity, it is surely that. Against the laws of nature itself, grotesquely, it lives on.

'If ever an activity should have long ago expired and been buried with dignity, it is surely correspondence chess.'

Correspondence chess has a long and, in many ways, distinguished history. Thomas Hyde, in 'De Ludis Orientalibus (published in 1694), writes of Venetian and Croatian merchants playing thus. But it was not until the seminal Edinburgh-London match (superbly covered in Tim Harding's *Correspondence Chess in Britain and Ireland, 1824-1987*) that it attracted widespread attention. It is, perhaps, important to consider why. This was no gentle exchange of epistolary pleasantries between dear, distant friends, but rather a fiercely contested challenge with large sums wagered on the outcome. Indeed, arguments raged in public for years afterwards, particularly on the ethics of London

attempting unsuccessfully to retract a reckless rook sacrifice in the second game.

Immoral and even illegal behaviour has dogged correspondence chess throughout its existence. The so-called 'Dead Man's Defence' – stalling a hopelessly lost position in the sincere hope that the opponent will either die or give up in disgust – is a familiar, contemptible anti-social stratagem. Results can be needlessly delayed by a year or more like this. As an unsporting ploy, it is far more effective than sulking in a tournament hall – the dismal equivalent for hapless over-the-board practitioners. Furthermore, as Internet trolls everywhere know, remoteness renders the incurred opprobrium less physically hazardous. But for real duplicity, there is little to beat soliciting advice. Alexander Khalifman once told that he used to regularly analyse and indeed play the correspondence games of his trainer, Gennady Nesis. He was particularly proud of one brilliancy (alas, I forget which), which he mockingly described as the greatest of Nesis' career. But if asking your future World Champion student to do your work for you may be considered a minor misdemeanor, what about assembling an entire team for the same purpose? Well, if you are rich and vain enough – as the late billionaire Joop van Oosterom was – you can call the tune. The Dutchman might have been a reasonably strong player, but he was nowhere near good enough to carry off the highest honours without others doing the donkey-work on his behalf, particularly after suffering a brain haemorrhage. And as he marched inexorably towards his two World Championship titles, his squad expanded and his own contribution decreased accordingly.

But if industrial-scale chicanery wasn't bad enough, what should have driven a massive stake through the heart of competitive correspondence chess was the advent of computers. When engines have become so ridiculously powerful, 'playing' becomes little more than data-mining. There is nothing wrong with that, of course – Hikaru Nakamura employs the modestly-rated (2156) Kris Littlejohn as his assistant. Undoubtedly Kris is highly adept at research, but what he does most certainly cannot, in any way, be considered as sport (nor, I am sure, would he consider it to be). Hikaru does that. I am still bewildered and traumatised by my stay with correspondence player Gordon Dunlop (nice chap though he is) in Perth a couple of years ago. The sight and sound of banks of whirring machinery administered from a master control-room upstairs still haunts me. It was mightily impressive in a way, but what, exactly, was the point? So much effort, and not a little expense, for an exercise in futility.

Correspondence tournaments, unsurprisingly, have long been extraordinarily dull bore-fests. You can only win if your opponent blunders, and why should they blunder if everyone is using Stockfish? If there is a case for tampering with the rules – and chess, let us not forget, has evolved throughout the ages – it is surely here. For a start, they should revert to the rule that existed for most of the first millennium in awarding the win to the person administering stalemate. Coincidentally, this was compellingly advocated by Cecil Purdy, the first ICCF World Champion, in at least two separate articles in *Chess World*. The change will not save correspondence chess as, although we will witness more decisive results, it probably doesn't make a big enough difference. But it may, nevertheless, prolong its existence and serve as an invaluable trial.

'You can only win if your opponent blunders, and why should they blunder if everyone is using Stockfish?'

The attentive reader might have observed a small measure of hostility in your columnist towards the dawdling version of chess. This animosity is perhaps rooted in the coercion, by my mother, to play two games against a pen-pal of hers many years ago. In some ways, though, the goals of correspondence were noble – overcoming the tyranny of distance, or as an engaging distraction. Literally hundreds of German soldiers along the Siegfried Line indulged in it – an undoubtedly more worthwhile and pacific pursuit than shooting at others, or being shot at. In the heyday of the pre-silicon era, buccaneering gambit-play was a most attractive aspect, but sadly there is no room for such folly in the 21st century when the engine delivers its cold, harsh verdict. Nostalgia is a wonderful thing, but this type of play no longer serves any purpose. It is time for the die-hards to admit it.

Nigel Short

VIDIT GUJRATHI

‘My parents mainly introduced me to chess to keep me out of mischief!’

Interview Vidit Gujrathi

Ready for the 2019 Masters. At the prize-giving it was announced that Alkmaar, famous for its 400-year-old cheese market, will be one of the ‘Tata Steel on Tour’ cities next year.

ALINA L'AMI

Rated 2712, he is currently India's third player behind Anand and Harikrishna, and given his young age Vidit Gujrathi may be his country's brightest hope for the coming years. **V. SARAVANAN** spoke to the winner of the Tata Steel Challengers, who does not hide his ambition: 'I plan to build a team around myself and to get to stay and play more in Europe.'

When Vidit Gujrathi sets off to Europe to play chess, he begins from home with a four-hour journey by taxi, aiming to reach Mumbai airport about four hours early to have a cushion before the scheduled departure of his flight. India's financial capital Mumbai is the nearest international airport to Nashik, his hometown and one of the second-tier cities of the state of Maharashtra with about 1.6 million inhabitants, compared to Mumbai's 18+ million. He notes wryly that though his town is bigger than a global city like Amsterdam, it is far out of the travel-easy zone by Indian standards. Onwards from Mumbai, he often has to change flights at a further hub – Dubai, Frankfurt or Paris – to catch a connecting flight. And once he reaches his destination airport, further transport may be required, by train, bus or car. The whole pilgrimage often takes more than 24 hours.

Has this geographical isolation never bothered him? Affected his chess? To a certain extent yes, he agrees, the other major handicap being the lack of a chess culture. He notes that, unlike a city like Chennai, where his friends and fellow-grandmasters Adhiban or Sethuraman can meet and practise with other strong players as and when they like, he has always been handicapped by the lack of such opportunities. From his earliest years this has prevented him from finding a permanent coach, apart from the money. Although he mentions people from his childhood who taught him chess – including a few illustrious GMs like Alon Greenfeld, Evgeny Vladimirov and Indian Abhijeet Kunte – it is clear that he did not stick to any coach for more than a year.

But he quickly points out that living in Nashik has lots of advantages as well, the foremost being the quietness of a relaxed life, which is the most enjoyable for an introvert home-lover. Often after an intense chess tournament, he returns to his quiet home with his close-knit family, where he enjoys chilling, binge-watching TV shows, going out on hikes and hanging out with his friends.

Lover of books and gadgets

And such a calm home life is probably the reason why Vidit has developed specific and strong interests over the years, which have ultimately helped him in his chess. A gadget lover and technology enthusiast from a pretty young age ('I own about 10 different headphones!'), he found out about custom-made laptops very early to aid his chess, and even tried to learn software coding out of curiosity.

A bookworm, he has developed an interest for autobiographies, and discovered philosophy and psychology as his deep interests. He is rightly impressed by *Man's Search for Meaning in Life* by Viktor Frankl, and is currently reading through *Bhagavad Gita*, the ultimate philosophical gift by the Hindu religion to mankind. Though confessing that he found it difficult to read Homer ('Tough!'), Aristotle and Socrates ('Too tough!'), the exercise nevertheless enabled him to find what he looks for in such serious literature: a change of personality from within, to be a better person, and learn new things all the time. He confesses that he has not developed any taste for fiction, frowning as if he is wondering whether he isn't taking his curiosity a little too seriously.

Vidit started off his chess at the age of 7, with the familiar target of beating his dad at the game. He achieved this immediately after starting lessons in the game, and right away began participating in competitions. A hyperactive kid, his parents mainly introduced him to chess to keep him out of mischief, engage him in a single activity and keep him away from watching TV. But he steadily

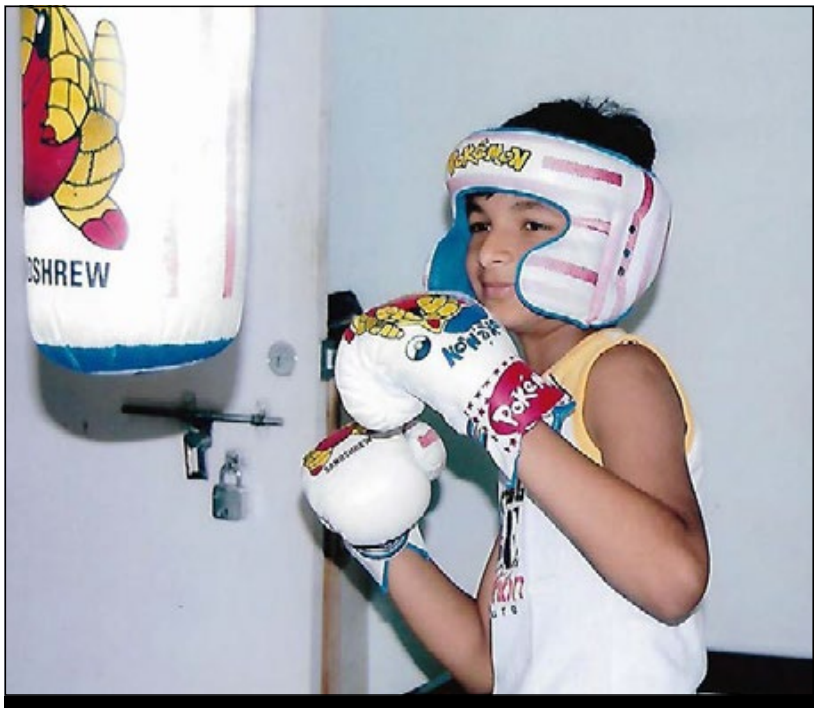
developed as a strong chess player, his first major break coming with winning the World Under-14 in 2008. This, he says, highly motivated him, because the title came with a laptop as a prize!

Somewhere along, he was introduced to chess books by one of his earliest coaches, and fell in love with them. The very first chess book he read seriously was one on Capablanca, which is probably an influence on his active positional style. He confesses to being a big fan of Soviet chess books – Botvinnik, Bronstein, Tal and the other usual suspects – and pointedly names Polugaevsky's *Grandmaster Preparation*, marvelling at the effort to which the author went to establish his own variation in the Najdorf. He admires such books, in which 'you can sense how much the author has put into writing it!' And he has maintained a healthy appetite for chess books ever since, revealing that during his breakthrough performance at the Wijk aan Zee Challengers, he bought about nine books!

An intense child

Vidit's father, Dr. Santosh Gujrathi, is a practitioner of Ayurveda medicine, an 'alternative medicine' with its root in Indian history, with the degree of Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery. His mother, Dr. Nikita Gujrathi, was a gynaecologist. As their surname indicates, the Gujrathis are not original natives of Maharashtra, the state where they live, but their forefathers were migrants from the north-western Indian state of Gujarat, the land of Mahatma Gandhi and the current prime minister Narendra Modi. But having been in Maharashtra for generations now, Vidit's family speak Marathi and Hindi at home and have more of a leaning towards the culture of Maharashtra.

He was an intense child, and it was quite common for Vidit's mother to find his ambitions written on the back of a chair, or on the parapet of the terrace during his childhood years. This level of intensity she cites as the reason for his parents to completely support Vidit in his passion. For a typical Indian parent, the moment of truth arrives when their children have to attend the 10th grade. Scoring marks at that point will enable their children to choose between Science, Art or Mathematics in the final two years of the school, and it is a nightmare for any parent if their children do poorly at their studies at this point due to other interests, and also fail later on in life.



An intense child. Boxing was one way for 10-year-old Vidit to get rid of his surplus energy.

U-14 World Champion Vidit Gujrathi was one of the special guests who came to congratulate World Champion Vishy Anand at a lavish birthday party in Chennai in 2008.

But in Vidit's case, his mother says she had no hesitation to let the 15-year-old take his own decision about what he wanted to do in life. And Vidit confesses it was not an easy decision for him either, as he had reached a rating of 2500 by the age of 15, but it took him three more years and about eight more failures to make his GM norms. Vidit's mom even took a break from her practice at that time to take care of her young son during his tournaments, travelling along with him and also taking

along her younger daughter Vedika, whom she couldn't leave at home! At the starting point of his career, since it was quite expensive for the family to send him to Europe for chess tournaments, his father borrowed money to support his travels, and he made all his grandmaster norms in Indian tournaments, mainly due to the want of sponsorship for travelling abroad.

Solid style

When and how did his major thrust towards a rating of 2600 start? Vidit says he never noticed when it happened. 'Whenever I played to increase my rating, I did badly!', he confesses. So he continued with his own way of playing chess, getting better and better at it, but doing everything much more seriously and working harder.

One of his earliest memories of the formation of his style was how he studied the Catalan Opening with the white pieces. He remembers marking all the games of the Megabase database with the opening that White won, and studying them all thoroughly. This also led to a relatively risk-free style, because (chuckling) 'Indians in general do not take much risk!'. But such focused studies also formed the core of his personality, as developing a solid style allowed him to develop a seriousness towards the sport.

Vidit was criticized during his formative years for showing his emotions at the board, especially crying when facing certain defeat. He is not proud of those days; he just could not handle losses. His personal mindset almost led to a crisis at the 2014 World Juniors at Pune. Unusual distractions during the event and developing an unhealthy interest in video games led to a poor performance, and although he was rated 2635 by then, it made him stop and question his life goals and progress.

A sustained work ethic and interacting with Anish Giri in 2016 brought Vidit his next surge in performance and rating. Vidit was clearly impressed by Giri's professionalism in preparation, which he cites as the main reason for him being one of the best in the world in opening theory. Accompanying Giri to Wijk aan Zee and Leuven last year and getting to interact with Vladimir Chuchelov and Erwin l'Ami are the reasons he picks for his progress to the target of 2700. 'You are the average of five people whom you regularly meet, and this company brought out a certain focus towards my chess,' he observes.

And what were his thoughts when he was invited for the Challengers group in Wijk aan Zee? Especially since his close friend Adhiban had jumped at a similar opportunity in 2016 and earned his ticket to the elite group the next year? 'No such thought was in my mind,' he says. He just anticipated the event positively, because he is sure that his style suits round-robins more than Open events.

Of course, how he managed to win the event and earn his ticket to the 2019 Tata Steel Masters is a well-known tale now, and he gives his own take on this success in his personal account in this issue.

What will the future hold for him? He is definitely playing much more freely and feels it's more for fun now. He plans to build a team around himself, getting to play and stay more in Europe, and getting more proficient with all the first moves with White ('Should have done it much earlier!')... And he knows for sure that it's going to be an interesting journey, indeed. ■

Vidit Gujrathi

Born: October 24, 1994 at Nashik, State of Maharashtra, India

Career highlights

2006: Gold Medal in Commonwealth Championship (U-12)
2008: U-14 World Champion, International Master
2009: Ties for first, finishes second in U-16 World Championship
2013: International Grandmaster
2013: Third in the World Junior Championship (U-20)
2014: Winner of National Challengers Championship
2014: Winner of Lake Sevan GM tournament in Armenia
2015: Second in National Premier Championship
2015: Debut for Indian team at World Team Championship at Armenia
2016: Debut for India at the Olympiad in Baku
2016: Retains title at Lake Sevan GM tournament in Armenia
2016: Gold with Indian team at the Asian Nations Cup, Individual Gold on Board 3
2017: Reaches Round 3 at Tbilisi World Cup
2017: September: Crosses 2700 for the first time, 4th Indian after Anand, Sasikiran and Harikrishna
2018: Wins Tata Steel Challengers

'You are the average of five people whom you regularly meet, and this company brought out a certain focus towards my chess'

ALINA L'AMI

Veni, Vidit, Vici

Indian top-seed qualifies for 2019 Tata Steel Masters

As the highest rated participant in the Tata Steel Challengers his mission was simple and unambiguous: first place and promotion to next year's Masters. In hindsight, it looked like a smooth and sovereign operation, as the 23-year-old Indian star coasted to victory without a single loss, a full point ahead of his biggest rival. But there's always more than meets the eye, and in a frank and personal account, **VIDIT GUJRATHI** allows us a peek behind the scenes of his finest success to date.

Ten days before I was about to leave for Wijk aan Zee, a moment of panic rushed in when I suddenly realized how little preparation time I had left before I was to head for the chess village on the Dutch North Sea coast. I had just arrived back home from Saudi Arabia, where I had had a mediocre performance at the World Rapid & Blitz. In view of my jet lag and melancholy mood I thought it unwise to start preparing concretely, so I decided to look at something to inspire me and opened my computer to look through the games of the previous Wijk aan Zee Challengers. At first it was a shock, because it was daunting to see that, in 2015, Wei Yi had won the Challengers with a +8 score! Indeed, 10½ points from 13 games!

But after a while I was reassured when I realized that, on average, +5 or +6 was sufficient to win the tournament. That was inspiring enough to get me to look at some chess, even though I know only too well that no matter how much you prepare before a tournament or a game, you will never get the feeling that you are 100 percent ready. And I certainly didn't have that feeling when I set out from my city of Nashik to stormy and cold Wijk aan Zee.

Although it was my debut in the Tata Steel tournament, it was easy to feel immediately at home in Wijk aan Zee, since I had been here last year as Anish Giri's second. This time, too, I regularly met both him and our friend Adhiban, who had returned to play in the Masters after his fine result in 2017. During our dinners, it was a recurring joke for them to tell me that I should know my place. After all, they were Masters and I was only a Challenger!

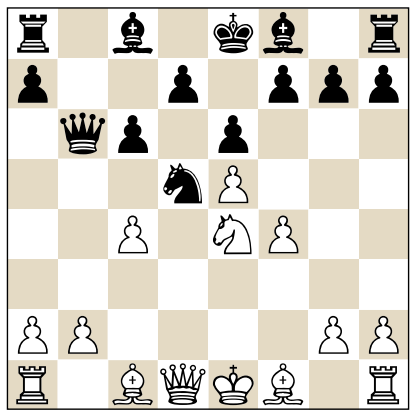
At the traditional drawing of lots, I was excited and curious to see which number I would get. Since I was the top seed and the numbers were picked in ascending order of rating, I would automatically draw the last remaining number. I remember comforting myself with the thought that I wouldn't pick the winning number, but the winning number would pick me! I know that this doesn't make too much sense, and I can see that Adhiban, who is known to love such quotes, is having too much of an influence on me. I was disappointed to find out that I got an extra Black when I drew number 10.

Aesthetic appeal

My first game as Black, against Junior World Champion Aryan Tari, ended in a fighting draw. In Round 2, I won with the white pieces against the 'veteran' of the tournament, Michal Krasenkow. I like that game because of its aesthetic appeal. How often do you play ♔e2-e3 in the opening and keep the king there for a few moves?

Vidit Gujrathi
Michal Krasenkow
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (2)
Sicilian Defence, Four Knights Variation

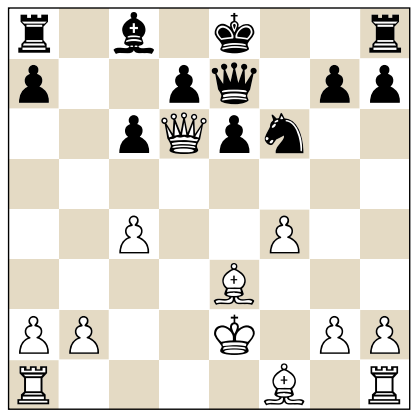
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.e5 ♘d5 8.♘e4 ♕c7 9.f4 ♕b6 10.c4



10...♗b4+

When great players advise you to study the classics, it's for a good reason. 10...♘e3 was played in Kasparov-Illescas, Linares 1992 (1-0, 32), a game well worth a look!

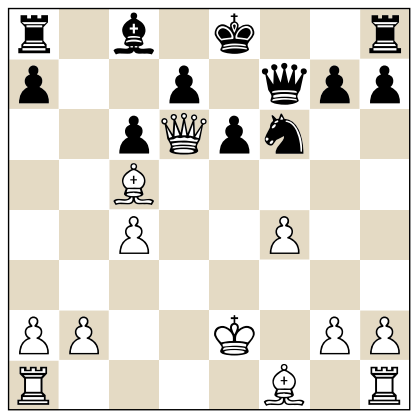
11.♔e2 f5 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♗e3 ♕d8 14.♘d6+ ♗xd6 15.♕xd6 ♕e7



He played this instantly. I didn't recall looking at this, so I was on my own here. 15...♗b7 is the main line.

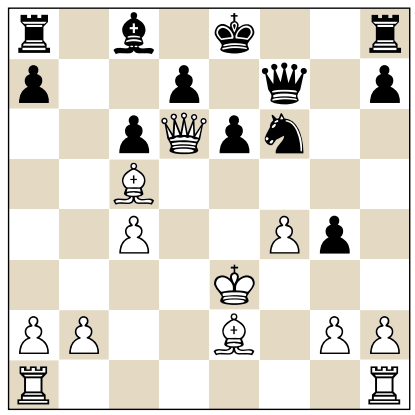
16.♗c5! Certainly more ambitious than 16.♕xe7.

16...♕f7 After 16...♕xd6 17.♗xd6 ♘e4 18.♗a3 d5 19.♔e3 is similar to the idea in the game.



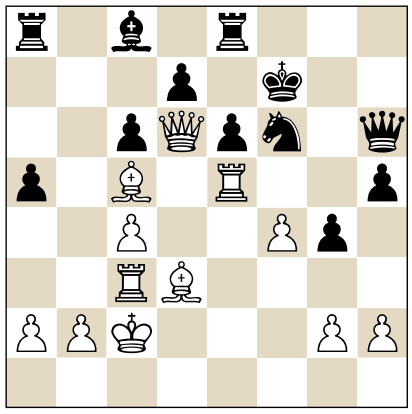
17.♔e3! Black's only threat was to play ...♘e4, and now my king stops it! The battery of queen and bishop completely paralyses Black's position. In the next few moves I improve the pieces at my convenience.

17...g5 18.♗e2 g4 18...♕g7 19.♖hf1 and opening the f-file only helps me.



19.♖ac1 Planning ♖c3-b3, stopping any ...0-0-0 ideas.

19...h5 20.♖c3 ♕g7 21.♗d3 ♔f7 22.♔d2 ♖e8 23.♖e1 ♕h6 24.♔c2 a5 25.♖e5



You can simply feel the difference in piece activity. Black's position is completely hopeless.

25...♘h7 26.♖f5+ ♔g8 27.♕e5

Black resigned.

After three rounds, the tournament picture was already starting to get clear. Anton Korobov was playing impressively and defeated Dutch GM Benjamin Bok in a long game, proving the conventional wisdom that two bishops are stronger than bishop and knight. I had a hard-fought game against Dr. Amin Bassem, which lasted for almost 6.5 hours. It was the big clash between the first and second seeds, in which Amin, despite being an hour down on the clock, took the initiative and started causing me all kinds of trouble in the Rossolimo Variation of the Sicilian Defence. But his poor time management eventually produced an error and I converted with proper technique.

Amin and I were among the last players to finish our game and were going to head back to our hotels. It was a typical Wijk aan Zee evening, cold, rainy and as windy as it could get. As we were walking out of the tournament hall, De Moriaan, we were greeted by a friendly guy. Mr. Hussein showed us many variations of our game and then even offered to drop us at our hotels. We found out that he was a cab driver in Holland and an ex-Iraqi player with a 2350 rating. When he enthusiastically showed us various lines, I could sense his passion and love for chess. That's the beautiful thing about Wijk aan Zee. Everybody there is such a chess fanatic. In every restaurant you visit, you will see countless people playing chess.

'Mr. Hussein showed us many variations of our game and then even offered to drop us at our hotels.'

Intimidating

In Round 4, I was happy to win a strategically pleasing game in a Rossolimo Sicilian (you can sense a pattern, can't you?) that looked more like a closed Ruy Lopez against Harika. Korobov won a longer but equally impressive game against Olga Girya. It's somehow easier to win when you are on a streak. It's amazing how confidence plays a role.

At this moment, the situation was quite clear. Korobov and I were leading the field by a full point, and it was mainly going to be a race between the two of us. Over one of our friendly dinners, Anish pointed out that it's a similar story every year. Two players battling it out, ahead of the rest. Good that I was aware of the history!

Korobov was playing great and energetic fighting chess. His rapid and confident play impressed everyone. In Rounds 5 and 6, he surged ahead, winning two dominant games against the talented youngsters Jorden van Foreest and Aryan Tari. I myself slowed down, scoring two less than exciting draws against the solid Erwin l'Ami and Benjamin Bok. But I must stress that I had two blacks in a row and had played four blacks in my first six games (okay, I'll stop complaining now).

Korobov was now on a brilliant 5½ out of 6 and looked invincible. Leading by a full point, it looked as if he was going to run away with the tournament. His rapid and dynamic play, combined with his tall Ukrainian physique, was quite intimidating. But it was he himself who preferred to see things in perspective. When the Tata Steel interviewer told him: 'You seem to be in great shape, Anton,' he replied in his dry, humorous tone: 'To tell the truth, I'm too fat and too old to be in great shape. Maybe this is my last success before the cemetery!'

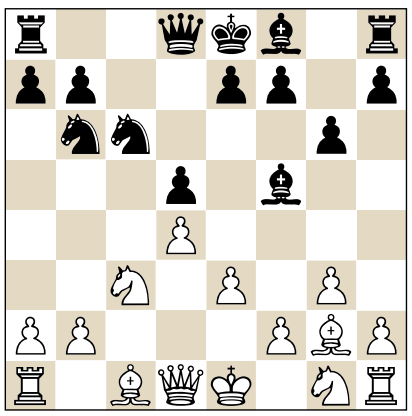
The following game is a good illustration of how easily Korobov was outplaying his opponents. I remember talking to Aryan Tari after the game, and he told me that he had felt tremendous pressure, both on the board and on the clock, right from the opening. Such play was characteristic of Korobov in the first half.

Anton Korobov
Aryan Tari
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (6)
Neo-Grünfeld

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4.♗g2 d5 5.♕a4

A forgotten line. Nowadays they play either ♕b3 or ♘f3-b3 set-ups.

5...♘fd7 6.cxd5 ♘b6 7.♕d1 cxd5 8.♘c3 ♘c6 9.e3 ♗f5



10.♘h3!? Against Van Wely, at the 2016 Baku Olympiad, I had played the more natural but probably inaccurate 10.♘ge2 ♘b4 11.0-0, and after 11...♗c2 12.♕e1 ♗f5, I was forced to repeat.

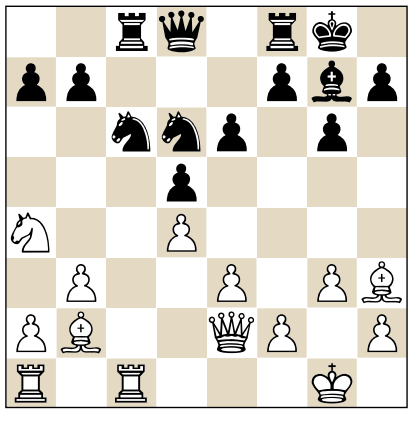
10...♗xh3

This looks like a slight concession. White will have the bishop pair and will be able to slowly improve on the queenside. Black has no weaknesses, but no clear plan either. From my experience, such positions are quite unpleasant to play.

From what I see, 10...h5 seems to be critical. In the post-game interview Korobov rightly observed that ♘h3 was a decent practical try, when Black would have to play accurately to equalize. After 10...h5, 11.♘f4 e6 12.h3 is one way the game can unfold. I'll leave the position open for the theoreticians to explore ☺.

11.♗xh3 ♗g7 12.0-0 0-0 13.b3 e6 14.♗b2 ♘c8 15.♕e2 ♘d6 16.♖fc1 ♖c8 17.♘a4!

I like this move. Over the last couple of moves, both sides shuffled their pieces and improved their positions. Now White starts to take concrete action. He wants to play ♘c5 and expand on the queenside. Although this doesn't make a big difference for now, it's unpleasant to face.



17...b6?!

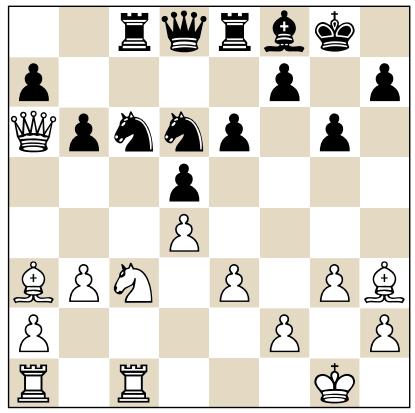
I understand that Aryan didn't want to allow the knight coming to c5, but now Black has long-term problems. The a6-square is fatally weakened and can be occupied by the queen or the bishop. The knight on c6 is a bit loose. There are just too many downsides to stop one plan.

Slow play with 17...♖e8 18.♘c5 ♖e7 was the need of the hour. Although I like White, objectively Black is completely fine. His next moves are easy: ...♖ec7-♗f8-h5, etc.

18.♗a3! ♖e8 19.♘c3!

The knight did his job on a4 and will now head for the juicy b5-square.

19...♗f8 20.♕a6



20...♖c7?

Aryan cracks under the pressure. Hard to say what he had missed. From his body language, I remember he looked very upset. Usually in such cases, one starts to curse oneself and

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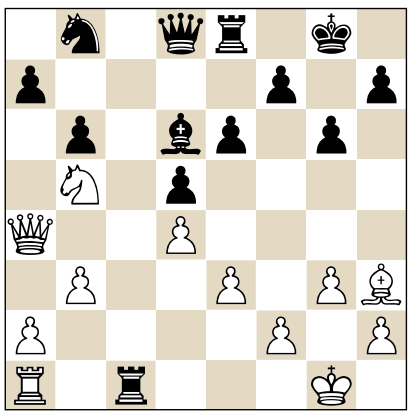
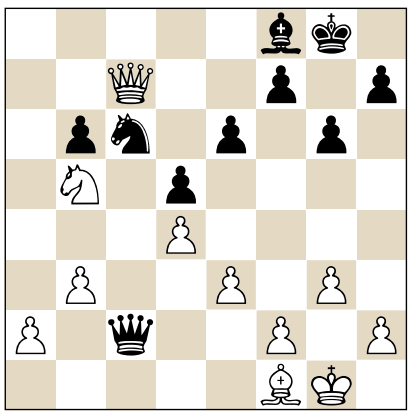
cannot bring oneself to play at one's full strength.
Instead, 20...♘b8! 21.♕xa7 (White should probably have gone 21.♕d3, followed by doubling on the c-file) 21...♖xc3! was the tactical way to solve the problems: 22.♖xc3 ♘b5.
21.♗xd6 ♗xd6 22.♘b5 ♘b8 23.♕a4! ♖xc1+



24.♖xc1 Now Black loses a pawn. Korobov doesn't give Black any chance and converts cleanly.
24...♖e7 25.♘xa7 ♖c7 26.♖xc7 ♕xc7 27.♘b5 ♕c1+ 28.♗f1 ♗f8 29.♕a7! ♘c6 30.♕c7! ♕c2



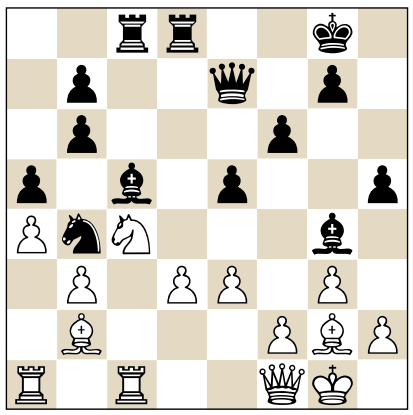
31.a3! No rush! Move by move, White is killing Black's counter-chances.
31...h5 32.h4 ♗e7 33.b4 ♗d8 34.♕d7 ♔g7 35.♘c7 ♗xc7 36.♕xc7 ♕a4 37.♕xb6 Game over. **37...♘e7 38.♕c5 ♘g8 39.b5 ♘f6 40.f3 ♘d7 41.♕d6** Black resigned.

Once in a blue moon

I won't lie. At this point, I did feel a little threatened about losing out on the prospect of tournament victory. The status quo, which was maintained in Round 7, didn't give me any reason for optimism. Korobov drew a worse position against Krasenkow with extreme ease. Meanwhile, I failed to beat the lowest seed of the tournament, 16-year-old Lucas van Foreest. When you are trailing by a point, playing with White against the lowest seed and not winning, it's quite disheartening. I have to learn to beat the Dutch guys!

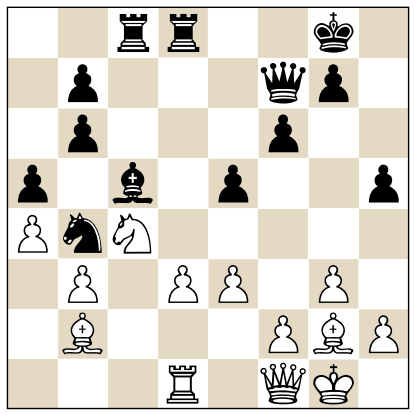
I am pleased with the way I handled this situation. Instead of succumbing to the pressure, I somehow felt relaxed (believe me, this is a once-in-a-blue-moon thing). It's a feeling similar to what Magnus Carlsen described after his infamous swindle in a piece-down position against Gawain Jones in the Masters. I merely felt that I had nothing to lose now and managed to win a tactical fight against the upcoming Russian Dmitry Gordievsky with the black pieces.

Dmitry Gordievsky
Vidit Gujrathi
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (8)

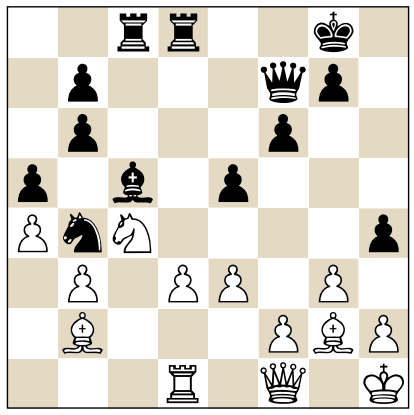


position after 21...♘b4

From an English Opening, Black has reached a perfectly satisfactory position. I could even have been better, had I not missed a good opportunity to play for a direct attack with ...h4 a couple of moves earlier. Now my opponent surprised me.
22.♖d1!?
He played this instantly, got up confidently from his chair and started walking. After the game he told me that he thought White was even better now! Exchange sacrifices are good and pretty, agreed. But it's still a sacrifice! People don't value material nowadays ☺.
But yes, after 22.♖c3 ♖c7 I haven't seen as ugly a piece as the rook on c3.
22...♗xd1 23.♖xd1 ♕f7
Increasing my control of the weakened light squares. In the next few moves, we both prepared and stopped the wrong plan! It was counter-intuitive to play for the d4 break, but in fact that's the only way for White to maintain the balance.



24.♔h1 He is preparing f4. Correct was 24.d4!, which leads to some very messy lines that are hard to assess, e.g., 24...exd4 25.exd4 ♗f8 26.♘xb6 ♖c2 27.♘c4 b5! 28.axb5 a4 29.♖b1!! (such a tough move to play!) 29...axb3 30.♘e3 ♖cc8 31.♕d1, and it is dynamically balanced.
24...h4?! Tactically stopping f4. Now White gets real compensation for his sacrifice. The light squares around my king are severely weakened.
Sometimes simple moves are good enough: 24...♖c7!. Now 25.f4?! is bad, because of 25...♖cd7 26.♗e4 exf4 27.gxf4 ♕e6, and Black is winning. And Black is clearly better after 25.♗e4 ♖cd7.

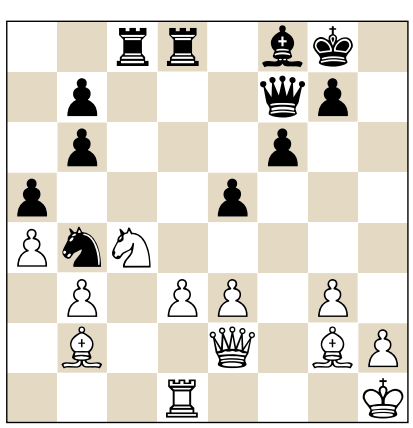


25.♕e2!

I felt very very uncomfortable after this move. Suddenly, it's not so easy to stop ♗e4, g4/gxh4. It's extremely annoying when you know your opponent's idea and you still can't stop it! From what I have read, Fischer had a reputation of playing in such a way. I sank into deep thought and came up with an interesting idea.

25...hxg3 26.fxg3 ♗f8

26...♖c7!? was again possible, but I had a trick in mind.



ALINA L'AMI

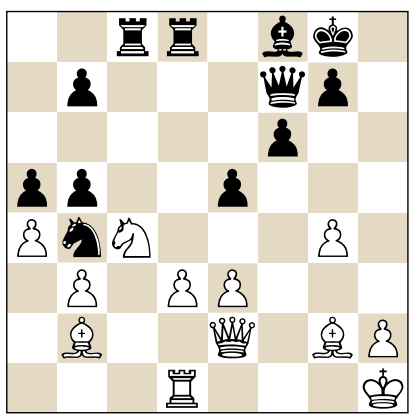
Anton Korobov was about the only one who was not impressed by his explosive 5½/6 start. 'To tell the truth, I'm too fat and too old to be in great shape. Maybe this is my last success before the cemetery!'

27.g4?

The price of every move is high in such positions. The position demanded energetic play and this is a bit slow.

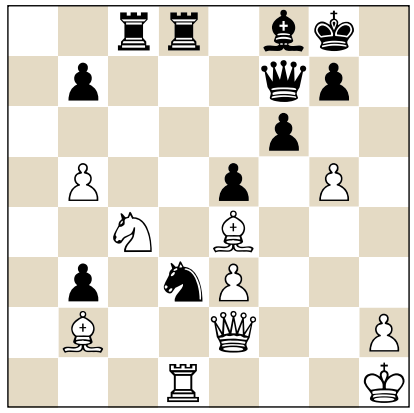
After 27.♗e4 my plan was 27...g6! 28.g4 ♖c7, and the position is extremely messy.

27...b5!



If I allowed him a couple of tempi, he would build a strong attack on the kingside. It's funny that the only way to stop his attack is to start my own on the queenside!

28.axb5 a4! 29.g5 axb3 30.♗e4 ♘xd3!



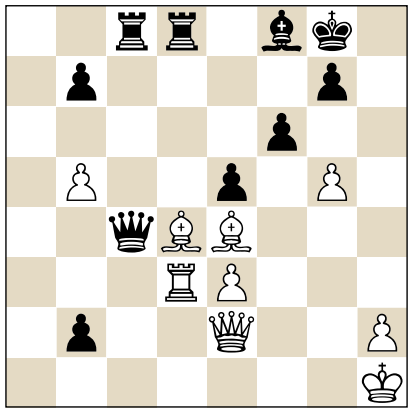
31.♖xd3?

This loses. He should have played 31.♗xd3 ♖xd3 32.♕xd3 ♕xc4 33.gxf6! ♕xd3 34.♖xd3 gxf6 35.♖xb3 ♖c2 36.♗a3 ♗h6, when Black is clearly better but White can still fight.

31...♕xc4 32.♗d4

His original intention was to play 32.♗h7+, but he had missed that I can simply stop the mate: 32...♔xh7 33.♕h5+ ♔g8 34.g6 ♗e7! 35.♕h7+ ♔f8 36.♕h8+ ♕g8.

32...b2



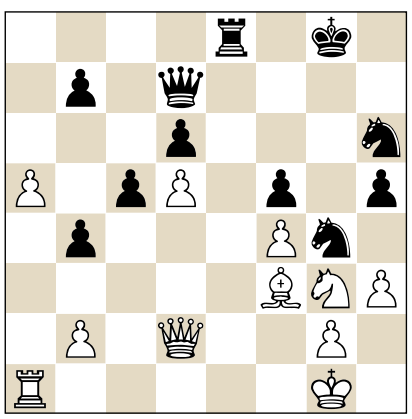
And White resigned in view of 33.♕h5 b1♕+ 34.♔g2 ♕cc2+.

It was refreshing to win after three draws! As Kasparov in his fabulous Masterclass pointed out, 'It is not about winning or losing, but in the end it's about winning or losing'! After three uninteresting draws I wouldn't have cared if I won the game in a rubbish way (although I probably would have, I guess). But it was a satisfying feeling to have played a good game.

'As Kasparov in his fabulous Masterclass pointed out, 'It is not about winning or losing, but in the end it's about winning or losing'!'

Amin helped me out by swindling Korobov in a complex King's Indian. Although it was complicated, objectively Korobov was on the better side of a Sämisch KID when in a moment of extreme tension he slipped and allowed a dangerous attack. In hindsight, this was the turning point of the tournament.

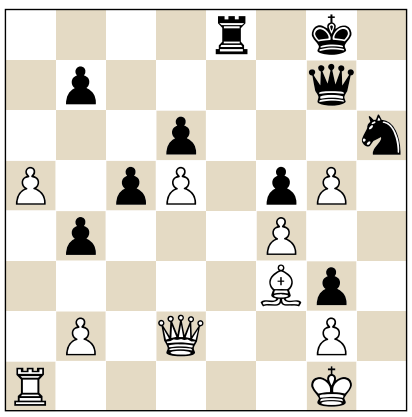
Anton Korobov
Bassem Amin
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (8)



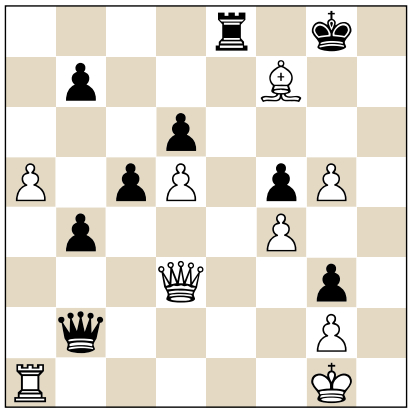
position after 30.♕d2

30...h4 31.hxg4?
It's hard to say what Korobov had missed. 31.♘f1 is a zillion times safer and better compared to the text-move: 31.♘f1! ♕g7 32.hxg4 fxg4 33.♗d1 ♘f5 34.♘h2 ♘e3 35.♗e2, and this only looks scary. White is, in fact, far better.

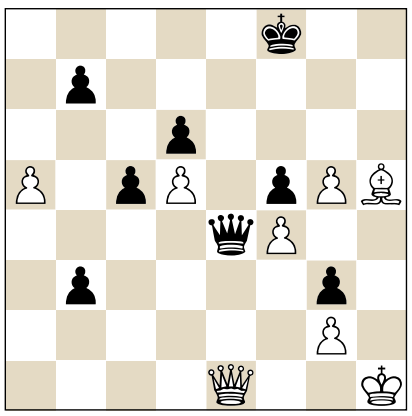
31...hxg3 32.g5 ♕g7!
Black's pieces coordinate perfectly. The attack down the h-file is very difficult to stop.



33.♗h5 Apparently, 33.♔f1! was the only move, as now, after 33...♕h8? (33...♘g4 34.♗xg4 fxg4 35.♖e1 ♖f8 36.♕e3 ♕f7 is slightly better for Black), 34.♖e1! would have Black in trouble.
33...♘f7 34.♕d3 ♕xb2 35.♗xf7+



35...♔g7! Clearing the back rank for the e8-rook. **36.♗xe8** As 36.♖f1 hits on 36...♖e1!, and wins.
36...♕xa1+ 37.♕f1 ♕d4+ 38.♔h1 b3 39.♕e1 ♔f8! 40.♗h5 ♕e4!



White resigned. Although Amin was worse, once he got a chance, he didn't let it go.

After eight rounds, Korobov and I were both on +4, followed by a bunch of players on 50 percent. The lead was reduced in the next two rounds, as both of us drew our games. First, I unsuccessfully tried to win a 'Kramnikian' Catalan against Matthias Blübaum. A fun fact: in the Masters, Karjakin-Wei Yi had the same position till move 20 and they were playing right beside us! It was annoying me that, despite the surprise, my opponent could just copy

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Wei Yi's moves! Next, I also drew against Jeffery Xiong. In a Stonewall gone wrong, I had to go passive and defend a tortuous position. 'Why this opening? Why did you have to play so fast? What an idiotic move that was,' I was ranting to myself during the game. Luckily, I managed to survive that danger.

Korobov also had his share of luck when he managed to draw against Harika Dronavalli. In computer terms, Harika had a +1 to +5 advantage throughout the game. She couldn't finish it off and drew. It was a game changer, literally. I felt that Korobov was no longer able to play with the energy and creativity he had shown in the initial rounds. Proving this point, he played a one-hour draw with the white pieces in his next game against Erwin l'Ami.

Although the slowing down of the leaders allowed the others to catch up, no one got very close. Jorden van Foreest, rightly hailed as the next big talent from Holland, came closest to catching us, scoring three points in the last four games with tricky opening preparation and tactical alertness.

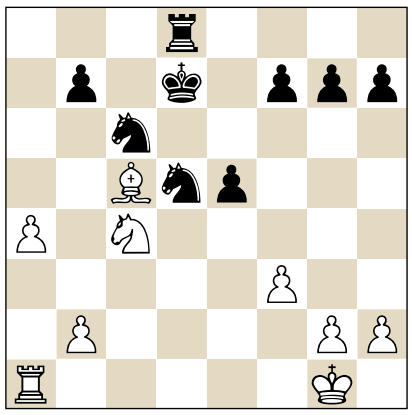
The big showdown

Round 11 was 'the big showdown', as I was going to square up to Korobov with the white pieces. It was nice to have a rest day before this important game. In the first week, I went to bed at 11 pm and got up at 8 am. As the days went by, I started sleeping late and had to force myself out of bed at 11 am. I wonder if it's only me who has such patterns. Usually, I end up preparing more than usual on the rest days, and when I come to the game, I am often exhausted. It's a bad pattern. This time, instead of preparing, I went for a 2-hour+ walk with Anish and his trainer Vladimir Chuchelov. Animals, innovation, helicopter to cars... we spoke about everything but the game. That was followed by the celebration of Benjamin Bok's birthday over a lovely lunch. That meant it was 4 pm and I had zero files ready. You never know if such 'extreme' relaxation is good or bad. In hindsight, this 'bad time management' was a blessing in disguise. Eventually, at 5 pm, I opened my laptop and got into the zone. I very much wanted to win this game.

'I felt that Korobov was no longer able to play with the energy and creativity he had shown in the initial rounds.'

Wouldn't it be nice to win against your main competitor after having chilled out two days? However, it was an anti-climactic finish.

Vidit Gujrathi
Anton Korobov
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (11)



position after 23...e5

24.a5?! A mistake. My hands were itching to play 24.b4!, and I still don't know why I didn't. Black is facing huge practical problems. After the game Korobov told me that he intended to continue 24...♘dxb4 (according to the engines, 24...♔e6 25.b5 ♘b8 26.a5 ♘d7 is the best defence. Honestly, to me the a- and b-

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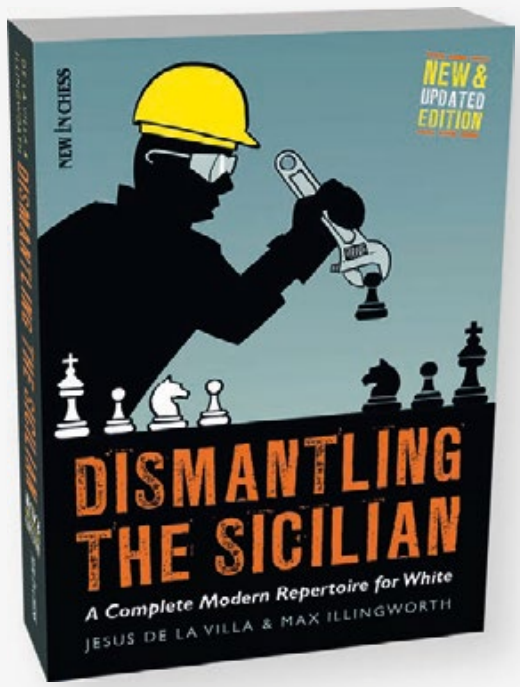
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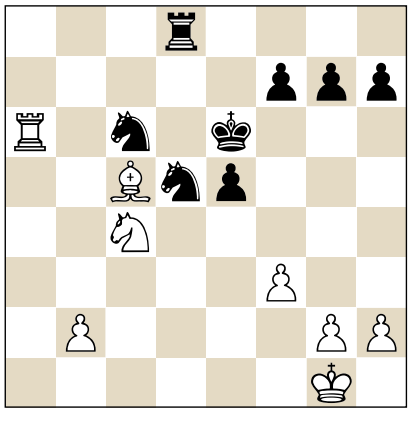
pawns look very threatening), as he had missed my 26th move: 25.♖d1+ ♔c8 26.♗d6!. There is no easy way to stop ♘b6 mate! 26...b6 27.♘xb6+ ♔b7 28.♘c4 f6 29.♖b1 ♔a6 30.♔f2, with a clear advantage for White.

24...♔e6 25.a6 bxa6 26.♖xa6



26...♔d7! I had simply underestimated this. The king comes back to defend and now it's just equal.

27.b4 ♘dxb4 28.♗xb4 ♘xb4 29.♖d6+ ♔e7 30.♖xd8 ♔xd8 31.♘xe5 Draw.

ALINA L'AMI

'That's the beautiful thing about Wijk aan Zee. Everybody there is such a chess fanatic. In every restaurant you visit, you will see countless people playing chess.'

Time for the Dutch Defence

This draw meant that the tension would continue for the last two rounds. Jorden van Foreest won another game in Round 11 and was only a point behind the both of us.

But then, suddenly, Round 12 became more like the final round. I took a small gamble. As Korobov failed to win against Lucas van Foreest with the white pieces, I played the Dutch Defence against Olga Girya.

Olga Girya
Vidit Gujrathi
Wijk aan Zee 2018 (12)
Dutch Defence

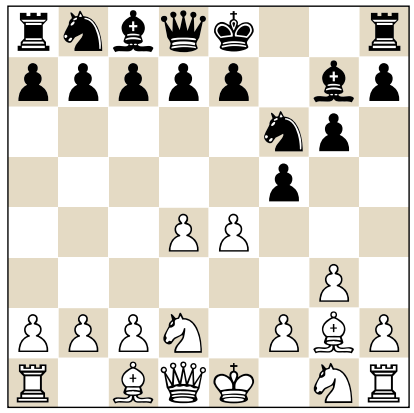
1.d4 f5

If not in Holland, then where?

2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘d2

I wasn't aware of this. Considering that I am not a regular Dutch player (P.S. I can't imagine being that!), it shouldn't have been too surprising.

4...♗g7 5.e4



Such a natural break in the centre looks good, but in fact it allows Black easy development.

5...fxe4 6.♘xe4 ♘xe4 7.♗xe4 d5 8.♗g2 ♘c6 9.♘e2

9.♘f3 is a possible improvement.

9...♗g4!

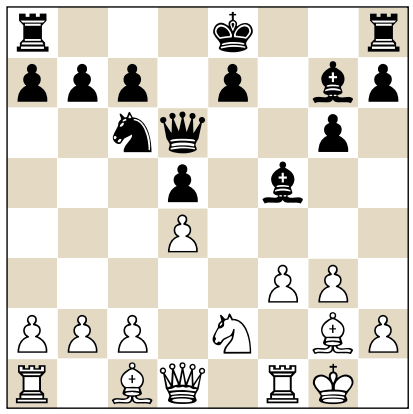
It was important to provoke f3. You can compare the game to this line: 9...♗f5 10.0-0 ♕d7 11.c3 0-0-0 12.♘f4!.

10.f3 ♗f5 11.0-0

For better or worse, White had to play 11.g4. If you say A, you have to say B.

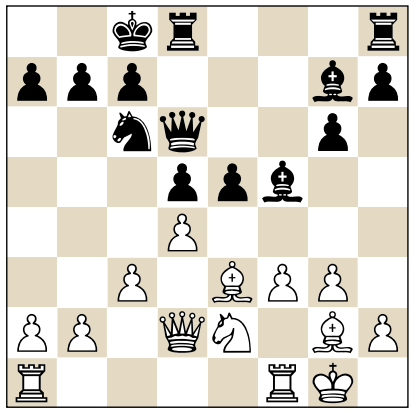
11...♕d6!

Square d7 is a more natural square for the queen, but I wanted to have the option of withdrawing the bishop to d7 in case of g4. As you will see in the game, it was useful.



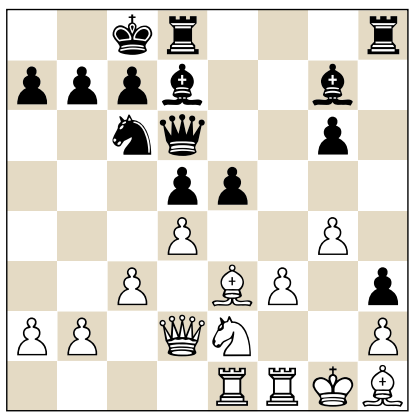
12.c3 e5 13.♗e3?! The position demanded concrete measures. This gives Black a free hand. Over the next few moves, Girya played too cautiously, allowing me to increase my advantage. More in the spirit of the position was 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘d4 0-0-0, with equality.

13...0-0-0 14.♕d2



14...h5 Creating potential targets on the kingside. 14...♖he8 or 14...♔b8 looked too simple. I wanted to attack! How often after 1.d4 do you get to castle queenside and push the h-pawn?

15.♖ae1 h4 16.g4 h3 17.♗h1 ♗d7

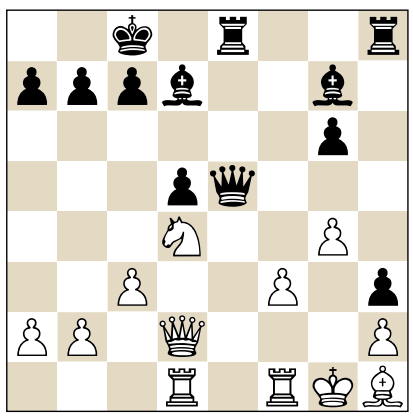


White's position is strategically lost. The bishop on h1 is buried, the kingside is weakened and to top it all, she has zero active play.

18.♖d1 ♖de8 19.dxe5?!

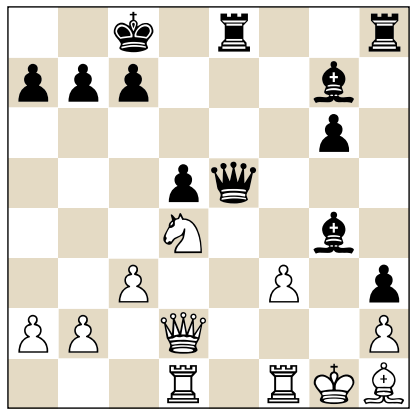
Although after any move Black would still have been better, 19.♖fe1 at least offered more resistance.

19...♕xe5 20.♗d4 ♘xd4 21.♘xd4



21...♗xg4 As the immediate 21....♗h6 is met by 22.f4, the idea is to clear the path for this move. But objectively this is a mistake. Girya had only a couple of minutes here, so I decided to increase the stakes! Practically, it's very hard for White to defend. A pity that it is not entirely correct. I wonder how Tal would survive in the modern world, where almost every pretty sacrifice is refuted!

I should have played 21...♕d6 or any other regrouping move that keeps the advantage. Just look at the dark squares and the bishop on h1.

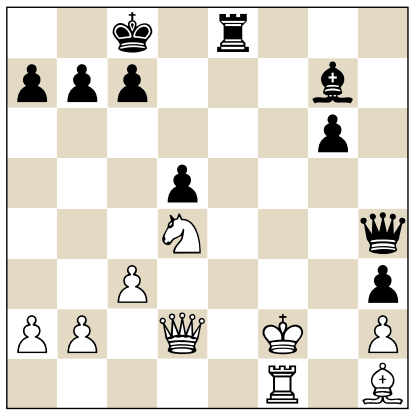


22.♖de1

She should have moved the other rook: 22.♖fe1! ♕h5 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.fxg4 ♕xg4+ 25.♔f2! ♗h6 (25...♕h4+ 26.♔f1) 26.♕xh6 ♕xd1 27.♕xh3+ ♔b8 28.♗f3 ♕e1+ 29.♔g2 ♕d2+ 30.♔g3, and White survives.

After 22.fxg4 ♗h6 we'd see Black's point: 23.♕c2 ♗e3+ 24.♖f2 ♖hf8 25.♘f3 ♕e4!, and Black wins.

22...♕h5 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.fxg4 ♕xg4+ 25.♔f2 ♕h4+



And here we see the difference between the two rook moves. Now White doesn't have the f1-square for the king.

26.♔g1 ♗h6 White resigned.

Before the final round, I was leading by half a point. I calculated various tie-break scenarios and after a sleepless night I went to the game aiming to fight – but in a risk-free game. After a few hours, when I saw that Korobov was already on the defensive against Gordievsky, I drew my game against Jorden in a completely equal endgame. Trying too hard to win, Korobov even lost and I ended up the winner!

For three weeks, Adhiban and Anish had been amicably taunting me with their 'Challenger, you are not a Master!'. It was a relief to know that I will face less torture in 2019! ☺ ■

Wijk aan Zee 2018 – Challengers — **cat. XV**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		TPR
1	Vidit Gujrathi	IGM	IND	2718	*	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	9	2744
2	Anton Korobov	IGM	UKR	2652	½	*	½	0	1	0	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	8	2695
3	Jeffery Xiong	IGM	USA	2634	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	1	½	0	1	½	½	½	7½	2667
4	Bassem Amin	IGM	EGY	2693	0	1	½	*	½	1	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	1	7½	2662
5	Jorden van Foreest	IGM	NED	2629	½	0	½	½	*	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	7½	2667
6	Dmitry Gordievsky	IGM	RUS	2622	0	1	½	0	½	*	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	7½	2668
7	Matthias Blübaum	IGM	GER	2640	½	0	0	½	1	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	1	0	6½	2609
8	Erwin l'Ami	IGM	NED	2634	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	6	2581
9	Benjamin Bok	IGM	NED	2607	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	½	½	½	6	2583
10	Aryan Tari	IGM	NOR	2599	½	0	1	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	0	½	½	1	6	2583
11	Lucas van Foreest	IM	NED	2481	½	½	0	1	0	0	0	½	0	1	*	½	½	1	5½	2564
12	Michal Krasenkow	IGM	POL	2671	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	1	5½	2550
13	Harika Dronavalli	IGM	IND	2497	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	5	2533
14	Olga Girya	WGM	RUS	2489	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	0	0	½	*	3½	2446

Judit Polgar

Recovering for the next game

Getting back on your feet again after an upsetting loss is never easy, but **JUDIT POLGAR** argues that keeping your feet on the ground after a flashy win is an even bigger challenge.

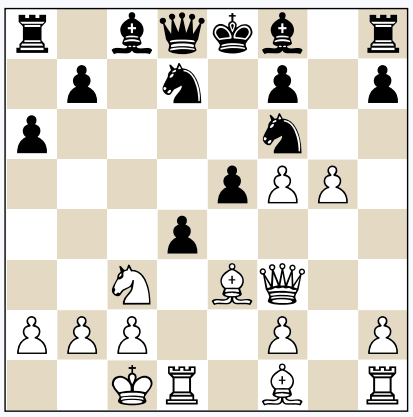
For the tournament player, an ever recurring issue is how to recover from one game to the next. How to maintain the same level of concentration and ambition throughout an event or even to gradually improve it. Experienced players won't be affected too much by games that take a 'normal' course, but things are less simple after a game that has a strong emotional impact. These games can be divided into two completely opposite categories: beautiful, exciting wins (especially if they happen against strong players) and heavy losses.

Strange as it may seem, games in the former category may be more difficult to deal with. You can get so happy – your head can be so filled with sun (to quote Tal) – that you'd rather bask in that feeling for several days or weeks than play a new game the very next day.

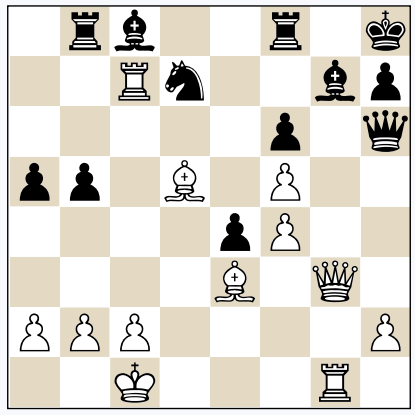
I remember at least two moments when I failed to overcome this psychological problem. The following game I analysed in New In Chess 1999/4, so I will insert only brief comments here.

Judit Polgar
Vishy Anand
Dos Hermanas 1999
Sicilian Defence, Scheveningen Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e6 7.g4 e5 8.♘f5 g6 9.g5 gxf5 10.exf5 d5 11.♕f3 d4 12.0-0-0 ♘bd7



13.♗d2!? I had analysed this new move with Jan Timman. The main move used to be 13.♗c4, but after this game the text-move became more popular.
13...dxc3 14.♗xc3 ♗g7 15.♖g1 0-0 16.gxf6 ♕xf6 17.♕e3
Black has managed to castle and kept his extra piece, but my better development allows me to maintain a very dangerous initiative.
17...♔h8 18.f4 ♕b6 19.♕g3 ♕h6 20.♖d6! Continuing to bring new resources into play. Now the bishops will become very active.
20...f6 21.♗d2 e4 22.♗c4 b5 23.♗e6 ♖a7 24.♖c6 a5 25.♗e3 ♖b7 26.♗d5 ♖b8 27.♖c7



Complete domination despite being a piece down.
27...b4 28.b3 ♖b5 29.♗c6 ♖xf5 30.♖xc8! A little combination to restore material equality and maintain the initiative.
30...♖xc8 31.♗xd7 ♖cc5 32.♗xf5 ♖xf5 33.♖d1 ♔g8 34.♕g2
Black resigned. There is no defence against 35.♕xe4, with decisive threats against the king.

This game was played in the first round of the strongest ever edition of the then traditional Dos Hermanas tournament in Spain. One would think that such a promising start should have given me a boost, but in the remainder of the tour-

‘It may be that once you have gone through the worst, your energy and inspiration are set free.’

nament, except for the final round, I failed to win a single game, while losing several on the way and finishing last in the classification.

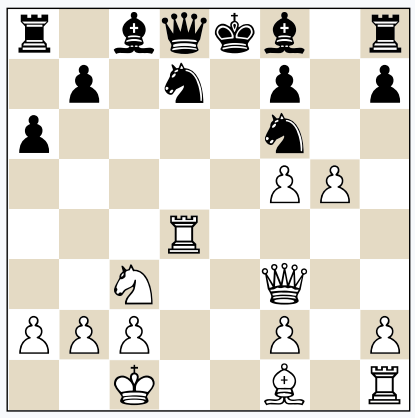
Things were similar after the next game, with, probably not entirely by coincidence, the same opening line. This is the kind of chess that represents me at my best, and winning such games makes me enormously happy. (I first annotated this game for New In Chess 2005/8.)

Judit Polgar
Rustam Kasimdzhanov
San Luis World Championship 2005
Sicilian Defence,
Scheveningen Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e6 7.g4 e5 8.♘f5 g6 9.g5 gxf5 10.exf5 d5 11.♕f3 d4 12.0-0-0 ♘bd7 13.♗xd4!?

Another almost unexplored move, deviating from my previous 13.♗d2.

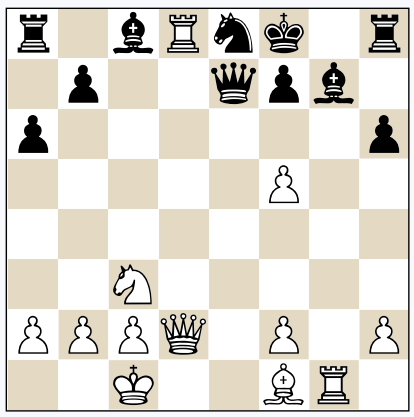
13...exd4 14.♖xd4



Once again, I am two pieces down. Hurrying to take on f6 makes no sense, since it would ensure Black some space and stability.

14...♗g7 15.♖g1 ♔f8 16.♕e3 ♕e7 17.♕d2 h6? Black’s wish to force me to release the tension is understandable, but wasting a tempo in such positions is very risky. My main line went 17...♖g8 18.♖g3.

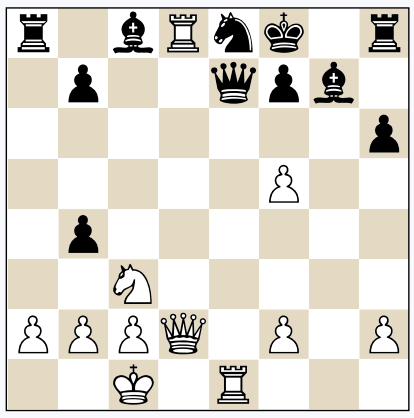
18.gxf6 ♘xf6 19.♖d8+ ♘e8



20.♗b5!!

Reminiscent of the same move from the so called triple ‘Argentinean tragedy’ [this refers to the three wins by Soviet players against three Argentineans in the same round at the 1955 Gothenburg Interzonal, where the key move was 13.♗b5!! – ed.]

20...axb5 21.♖e1 b4



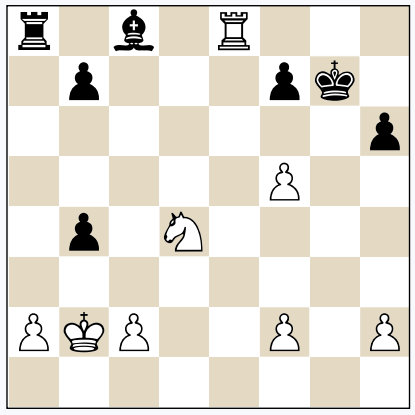
22.♘b5?

But this move mars the attacking rhythm and could have turned the tables. Strongest was 22.♖xe8+! ♔xe8 23.♖xe7+ ♔xe7 24.♘d5+ ♔f8 25.♘b6 ♗f6 26.♘xa8, winning.

22...♗xb2+?

During the next phase of the game I noticed that Rustam was very discontented. Later I found out that he had realized he had missed his chance with 22...♗e5!, gaining important time for his development and for preserving his material advantage. I confess that I had not noticed this resource.

23.♔xb2 ♕f6+ 24.♕d4 ♔g7 25.♖exe8 ♖xe8 26.♖xe8 ♕xd4+ 27.♘xd4



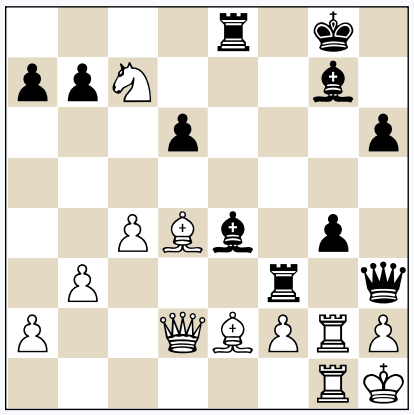
Everything has returned back to normal for White. The play has transposed to an endgame that I had little trouble winning (1-0, 42).

After a first-round loss, this game played in Round 3 brought me back to 50% and put me in an excellent mood. But even though this was a relatively long event (14 rounds!), I failed to win a single other game in this World Championship tournament and, as in Dos Hermanas, ended up in last place.

Paradoxically, it seems that I used to deal better with the opposite psychological situation, which arises after a loss. On several important occasions I struck back with a spectacular win the next day. It may be that once you have gone through the worst, your energy and inspiration are set free, as in: if everything is bad, why should I care? And my mood after this mix of emotions (first a loss, then a win) may be more balanced or less perturbed than after games like the one above, allowing me to continue in a positive vein and to play well.

At the strong 1992 Aruba Grandmaster tournament, I started with an excellent 3½/4, but in the fifth round I lost to Psakhis, who went on to win the event by a margin of 1½ points. The very next day I played the following game.

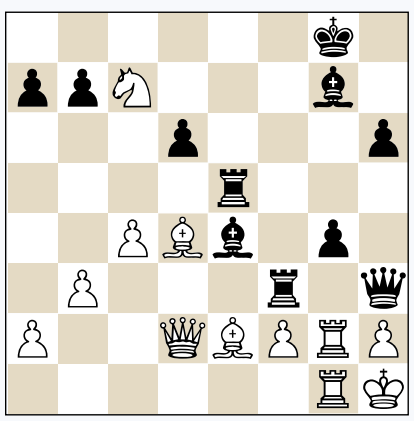
Julio Granda Zuniga
Judit Polgar
Aruba 1992



position after 25.♖cg1

In the early middlegame, I had managed to turn the fight into a tactical one, despite Julio's solid opening choice. I am a piece down and my rook is hanging, but White's king is in danger. The next move makes the jigsaw pieces fall into place.

25...♖e5!!



The main threat is not 26...♖h5, when after 27.♗xf3 things would not be entirely clear, but 26...♖g3!! 27.fxg3 ♕xh2!+ and the simpler 26...g3.

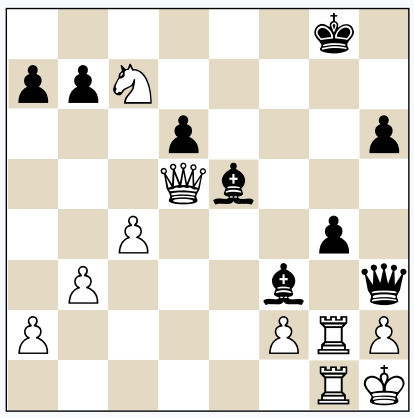
26.♗xf3? Missing my last move in the game despite a 40-minute think.

After 26.♗xe5?, 26...♖xf2! wins, but bringing the knight back into play was essential: 26.♘d5! (planning ♘f4 in many cases). The main line goes 26...g3! 27.fxg3 ♖xg3 28.♘f4 ♖xg2 29.♖xg2 ♗xg2+ 30.♘xg2 ♖g5 31.♗f1 ♗xd4 32.♕xd4 ♕f3, with adequate compensation for the material but no more.

26...♗xf3 27.♗xe5 27.♕f4 leads to mate: 27...♕xg2+ 28.♖xg2 ♖e1, mate.

The knight centralization arrives too late: 27.♘d5 g3! (threatening 28...♕xh2 mate) 28.fxg3 ♕xh2+ 29.♔xh2 ♖h5 mate.

27...♗xe5 28.♕d5+



Julio thought that I had to take his queen, which would have freed his position.

28...♔h8! But he had overlooked this move, forcing immediate resignation. This game inspired me to continue my winning streak and I ended up shared second in the tournament.

The ability to kick back after a loss served me well during the Knock-Out World Cups. Losing the first game of a two-game mini-match puts you in an extreme situation in which you are required to level the score at once. The reader may remember my win as White against Gelfand in Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (see New In Chess 2010/1), very much in the spirit of the King's Gambit. This was Gelfand's only loss on the way to winning that World Cup.

My task was even more difficult when I needed to win as Black against Leinier Dominguez two years later. With nothing to lose, I took unacceptable risks and was repaid for my courage by winning the game and later the match.

Tips

■ Never ever even think of winning a beautiful game!

■ Sorry, just kidding! Try to take a beautiful win calmly. There will be time to enjoy every bit of it when the tournament is over. But the one and only thing that matters there and then is the next game.

■ Getting your feet back on the ground again after losing can offer you the freedom to be yourself and play your best chess. ■

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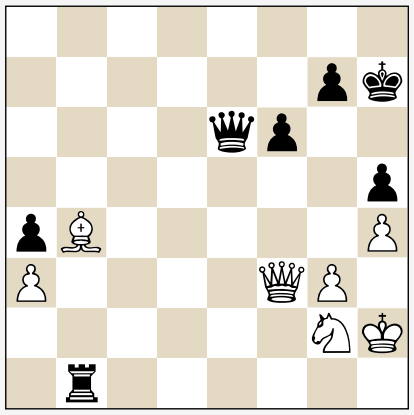
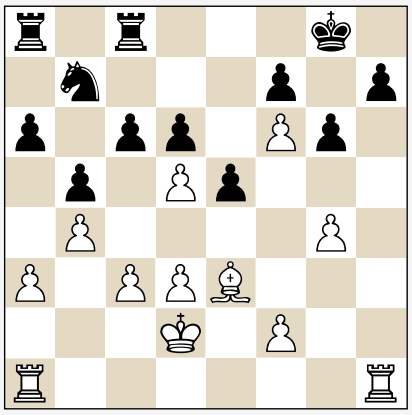
Find the best move in the positions below

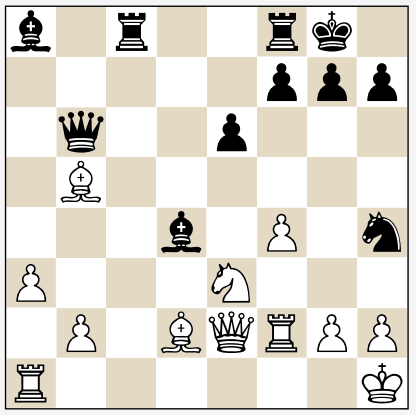
Solutions on page 99



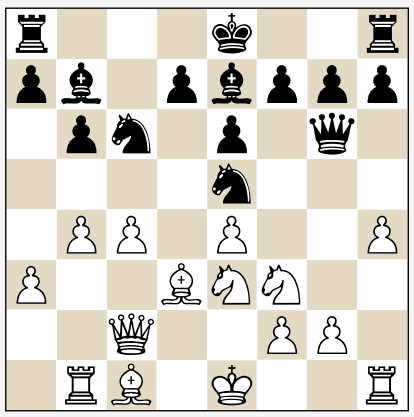
1. Black to play



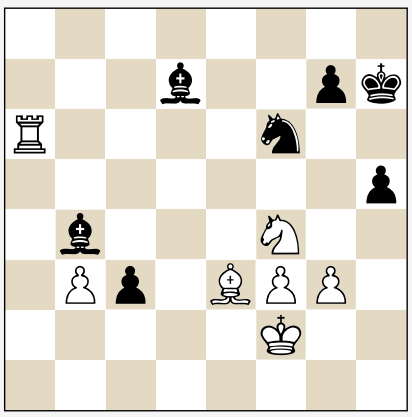
2. White to play



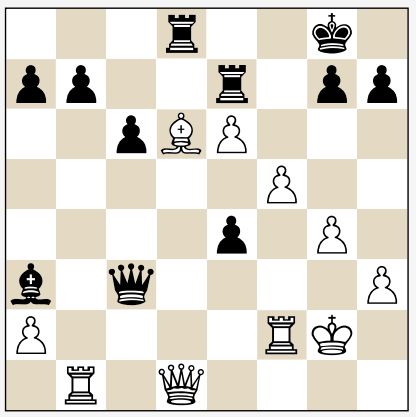
3. Black to play



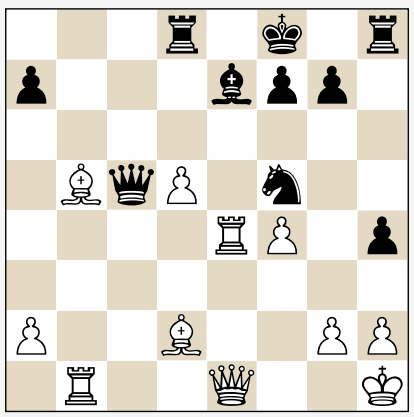
4. Black to play



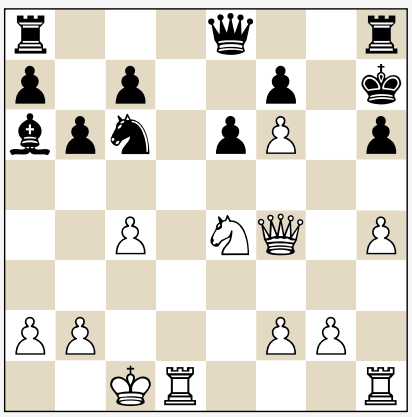
5. White to play



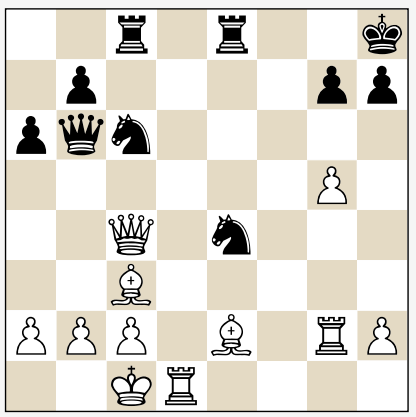
6. White to play



7. White to play



8. White to play



9. White to play

The future or merely a variant?

$ 190,000 prize-fund for 5 days of Fischer Random

The Henie Onstad Art Centre in Baerum, a suburb of Oslo, hosted the unofficial Fischer Random Chess World Championship. In a 16-game match between Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura the Norwegian prevailed both in the rapid and the blitz part, taking home $115,000. **MAXIM DLUGY** looks at the merits of Fischer Random, aka Chess960, referring to the number of positions the game can start with.

The match in Baerum hoped to revive the interest in Fischer Random Chess, which has been waning ever since the highly popular Chess960 events in Mainz, Germany, staged by tireless promoter Hans-Walter Schmitt, came to an end in 2009. The last player to be crowned Chess960 World Champion in Mainz was Hikaru Nakamura and this made him a logical opponent in a new unofficial title match against overall World Champion Magnus Carlsen.

The hefty prize-fund of $190,000 to be split 60-40 between the winner and the loser, was by far the highest ever for this kind of competition and many eyes turned to see if Magnus Carlsen could transfer his chess-playing abilities to this variation of chess as he combatted the owner of one of the fastest brains and hands on the planet, Hikaru Nakamura.

The format was probably also chosen to excite the audience: first, spread over four days, 8 games at 45 minutes for the first 40 moves, followed by 15 minutes to finish the game without any delays or increment. And then a final day of 8 games of 10 minutes with 5 seconds increment. On the first four days, double points were to be earned. This could

LENNART OOTES

With their knights neatly tucked away on a1/a8 and b1/b8, Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura have started the first rapid game of their Fischer Random match. On the right Hans Olav Lahlum, chess arbiter, commentator and bestselling author of historical books and thrillers, has a front seat.

have been a decisive factor had Carlsen taken a draw in a totally drawn position in Game 8 instead of inexplicably playing on till he lost on time. Now he only won the 'rapid' 9-7, but as he also won the 'blitz', 5-3, his overall victory was never in danger.

Castling

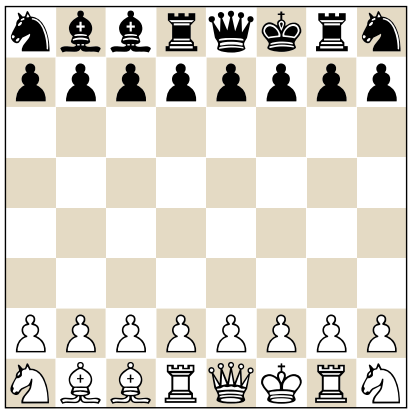
As I followed the action, watching interviews and reading comments and reports, I could not escape the notion that the chess world is clearly divided about Fischer Random (FR). How should we approach this variation of the game that I and many of my colleagues hold dear in our hearts? This version, heavily advocated in his final years by Bobby Fischer in his fight against the ever-growing importance of opening theory?

Should we embrace FR as it gives us 959 more games to play, as Norwegian GM Jonathan Tisdall wrote? Or reject it, as it will turn chess into just another board game, as I saw in a Facebook post?

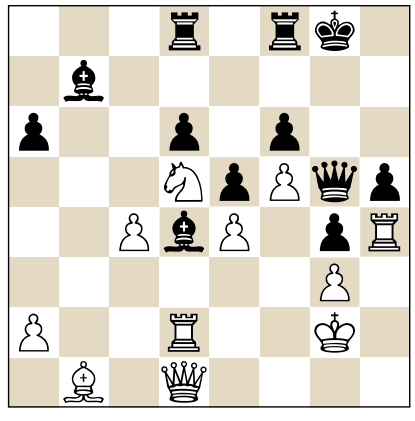
Of course, I am writing for an audience that generally loves the chess we play and is likely to be inclined to hold on to it. FR is basically chess with pieces set up differently and castling rules that take some time to get used to. Besides the dismantling of opening theory – unless you are fortunate enough to end up with that one position we all know so well – castling seems to be the biggest 'difference' between traditional chess and FR. In fact the FR rules for castling are very similar to traditional chess – if the rook and king have not yet moved you have the right to castle once in a game by moving the king in the direction of the rook and letting the rook jump over the king, as long as the squares between the rook and king are vacant and not covered by enemy pieces. What helps to know is that irrespective of the starting position, the castled position will always be identical to the kingside or queenside castled positions of the king and rook as we know them.

Look what happened in the third blitz game.

Hikaru Nakamura
Magnus Carlsen
Baerum FR blitz 2018 (3)



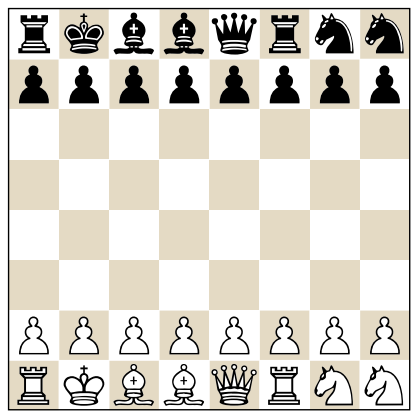
Here we go – the earliest repeat castling recorded in a chess game: I am sure players concerned about king safety must have had a smile on their face after the following first moves:
1.0-0 0-0 Correct, the kings are now on g1 and g8, and the kingside rooks on f1 and f8! **2.e4 c5 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 a6 5.♘g3 ♗a7 6.♖d3 d6 7.b3 ♘c7 8.♗b2 f6 9.c4 ♘g6 10.♘c2 ♘f4 11.♖d2 e5 12.♘e3 g6 13.♘e2 ♘ce6 14.♘xf4 ♘xf4 15.g3 ♘e6 16.f4 ♘d4 17.♔g2 b5 18.♘d5 ♕d7 19.f5 bxc4 20.bxc4 g5 21.h4 g4 22.♗xd4 ♗xd4 23.♕d1 ♕g7 24.h5 ♗b7 25.h6 ♕xh6 26.♖h1 ♕g5 27.♖h4 h5**
And in this position Hikaru found an excellent tactical resource:



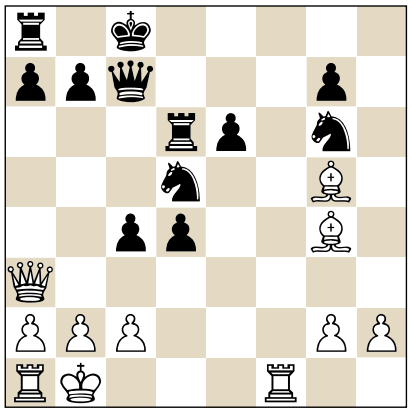
28.♖xd4! exd4 29.♘f4 ♕xf5 30.♖xh5 ♗xe4+ 31.♔f2
And Magnus had to start defending a difficult endgame with two rooks for the queen. For a long time Hikaru played very well, but in the end Magnus managed to draw. On move 134, thanks to the 50-move rule.

Another example of the unusual impact of castling was seen in the following blitz game.

Hikaru Nakamura
Magnus Carlsen
Baerum FR blitz 2018 (7)



1.e4 e5 2.♘g3 ♘f6 3.d4 d6 4.f4 exd4 5.♘f3 c5 6.e5 dxe5 7.fxe5 ♘d5 8.♘e4 ♗e7 9.e6 ♗xe6 10.♕g3+ ♔c8 11.♗e2 ♘g6 12.♘fg5 ♕c6 13.♘xh7 ♖d8 14.♘hg5 ♗xg5 15.♘xg5 ♕c7 16.♕a3 c4 17.♘xe6 fxe6 18.♗g4 ♖d6 19.♗g5



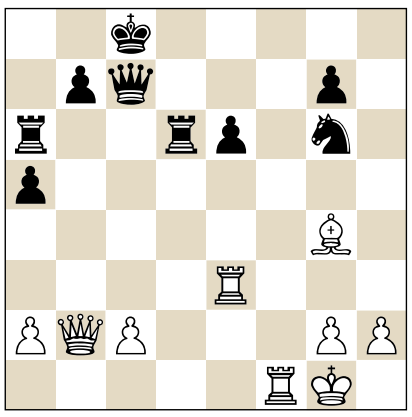
Castling versatility. The beauty or the ugliness – depending on whose camp you're in regarding FR – is the ability to castle from seemingly uncastleable positions. Here White, Hikaru, is planning to increase his edge by castling queenside, after for example: 19...b6 20.0-0-0 ♔b7 21.♖xd4 and White is clearly better. Magnus decides to ruin White's harmony on the queenside:

19...c3

Only to be hit by castling to far-away land on the other side of the board.

20.0-0! And suddenly the position looks just bad for Black.

20...cxb2 21.♕xb2 ♘e3 22.♗xe3 dxe3 23.♖ae1 a5 24.♖xe3 ♖aa6



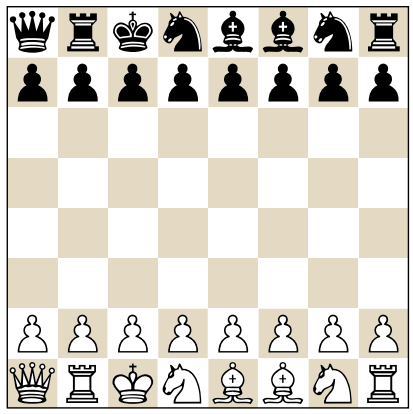
25.♗h5 Instead, 25.♕b5!, aiming at e8, was simply finish.

25...♘e7 Black's only chance was to get some play with 25...♘h4 26.♖c3 ♖ac6 27.♖xc6 ♕xc6 28.♖f8+ ♔c7 29.♕xg7+ ♔b6 30.♕g3 ♘f5 31.♕f2+ ♔c7, although the endgame after 32.♕a7 ♕b6 is pretty dreary for Black.

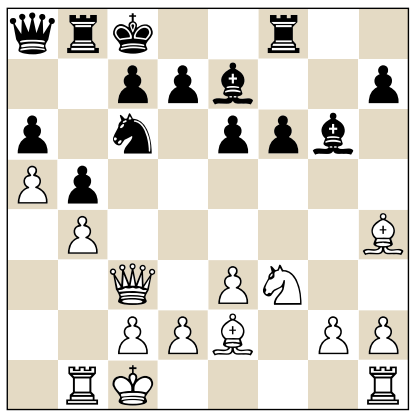
The game was far from over, and Carlsen got chances to survive, but after 64 moves Nakamura hauled in the point.

And here is another example of the impact castling can have in FR.

Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
Baerum FR blitz 2018 (1)



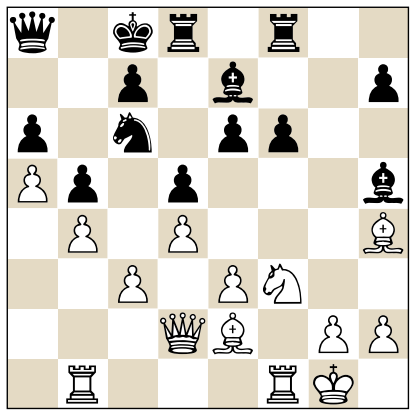
1.a4 e6 2.a5 a6 3.e4 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘d5 5.♘f3 f6 6.exf6 gxf6 7.♘e3 ♘xe3 8.fxe3 ♗g6 9.b4 ♗e7 10.♗h4 ♖f8 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.♕c3 b5



In this position, Magnus castled and the unattractive position of Black's queen on a8 immediately stood out like a sore thumb.

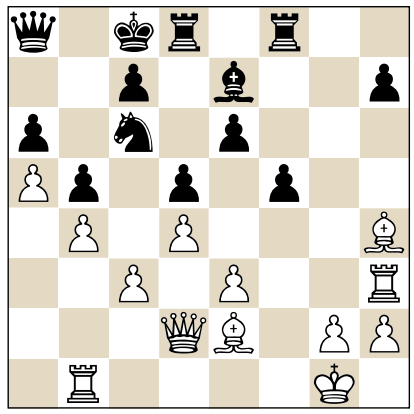
13.0-0 0-0-0 Black has nothing better than to castle long, but now Magnus takes the initiative on the kingside, thanks to the absence of her highness.

14.d4 ♗h5 15.♕d2 d5 16.c3



16...♗xf3?! It was a long but necessary haul to get the queen back into the game. After 16...♔b7 17.♘e1 ♗g6 18.♘d3 ♗xd3 19.♕xd3 f5 20.♗g3 ♕c8 21.♗f3 ♕d7 Black is back in the game.

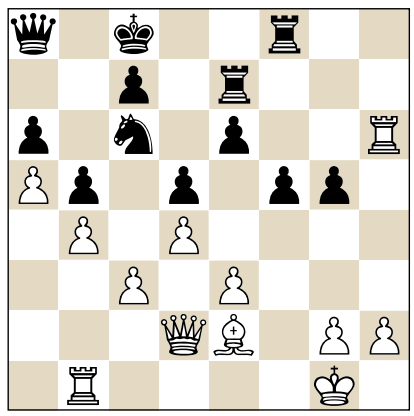
17.♖xf3 f5 18.♖h3 The very blocked pawn structure gives Black good chances to hold, but he has to be careful. Trading bishops was important here.



18...♖d7 After 18...♗xh4 19.♖xh4 ♖d7 20.♖h6 ♖e7 21.♖f1 ♔b7 22.♖f4 ♕e8 Black would be fine.

19.♗g3 ♗g5 20.♗f4 h6 Hikaru cannot afford to open up the e-file and trade on f4 now. Magnus looks for a way in.

21.♗xg5 hxg5 22.♖h6 ♖e7



23.e4! And here it is! Opening up the game makes Black's queen's predicament quite clear.

23...dxe4 24.♕xg5 ♔b7 25.d5! A simple tactic to pick up the knight on c6.

25...exd5 26.♖xc6 ♖ef7 27.♖c5 ♖d7 28.♕g6 ♕d8 29.♕c6+ ♔a7 30.♗xb5! And now the coup de grâce. **30...axb5 31.♖xb5 ♕c8 32.a6** Black resigned.

Questions, questions

There are many questions in my head that I am trying to field while writing this article. Such as: is this good for chess? It seems like the general answer is yes. If more people play any variant of chess it is logical that they would have to first learn the rules and basic principles of chess, especially as they become some of the major guidelines in FR. This can only be good for the popularity of chess.

Is this good for chess professionals? I think here too, it is clear that whether you are a player or a coach, if FR takes off there will be more opportunities to both play and write about this new chess variation.

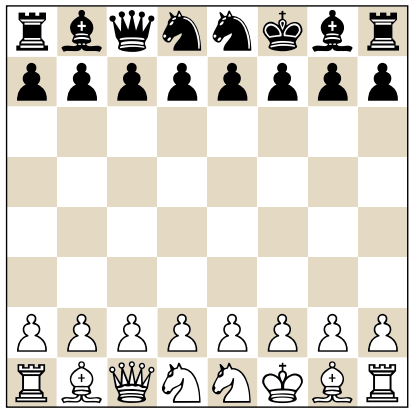
Should this become rated? Gata Kamsky in a post on Facebook calls for rating FR. I have to respectfully disagree with rating it as chess, as it is clearly a slightly different game, but I see no reason not to introduce new ratings for FR. Ratings boost the interest for players' performances and therefore for FR to take off it needs to be rated.

'When I look at the starting position, just like any other classally trained chess player, I try to find the best way to fight for the centre, while organizing the development of my pieces.'

The Norwegians worked hard to get top-notch coverage of this event, giving it full TV coverage during the Winter Olympics in the hope that the FR idea resonates throughout the world. I think they were successful in their efforts and that the discussion about the viability and the need to promote FR is just starting.

Let's end with the fourth rapid game. A game that says a lot about the potential of FR and the thoughts I had while following the match in Baerum.

Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
Baerum FR 2018 (4)



Of course, when I look at the starting position, just like any other classically trained chess player, I try to find the best way to fight for the centre, while organizing the development of my pieces. It's not surprising that Magnus is able to find most of few top moves given by the engines to develop his pieces harmoniously.

1.d4 c5

Black is playing an analogue of a Scandinavian Defence, developing his b8-bishop, while taking out the centre by moving his queen out.

2.dxc5 ♕xc5 3.f3

Development here is really managing to develop 4 minor pieces in a way that allows one to castle and ideally connect one's rooks. The obvious problem child for Black here is the bishop on g8, which needs to be developed eventually, as the dark-squared bishop and the knights have quite good prospects. Magnus wins a tempo by kicking the queen, but also establishes a blockade against the light-squared bishop with e4 and f3, forcing Hikaru to solve problems.

3...♕c7 4.♕d2 f5

HOWARD LIKES TO INVITE FRIENDS OVER FOR AN EVENING OF CHESS 960
WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY POSITION 291?
NO, 943 IS MORE LIKELY TO BE YOUR CUP OF TEA ...
BEREND VONK
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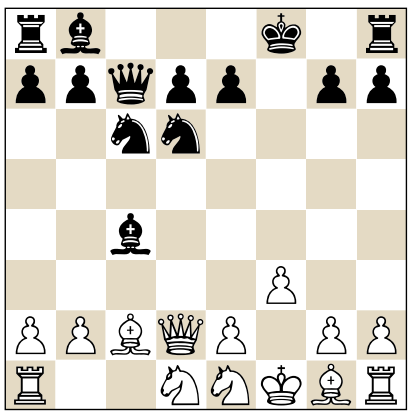
Hikaru tries to get his bishop out early. Magnus decides to spice things up with a pawn trade.

5.c4 ♗xc4

Passive defence with 5...e6 is not Black's style, so Hikaru obliges.

6.♗xf5 ♘d6 7.♗c2 ♘c6



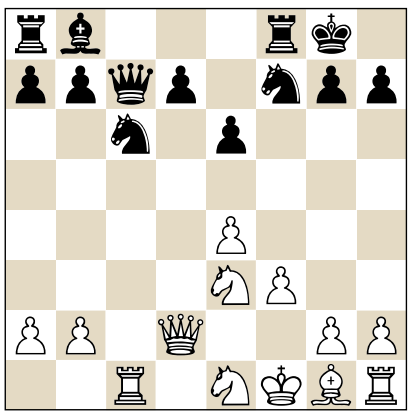
8.♖c1

Quite often FR requires one to start playing Larsen-style and push the pawns on the flanks. Here too, plans combining h4 and g4 were quite promising. For instance: 8.♘e3 ♗f7 9.h4 a5 10.h5 a4 11.♖h4 and the play hardly resembles normal chess.

8...♗f7 9.♗b3

Magnus decides to swap bishops. An alternative was to limit the black bishop's actions with b3, followed by a flank lunge with h4.

9...0-0 10.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 11.e4 e6 12.♘e3



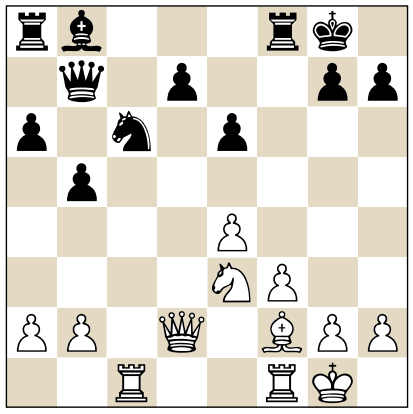
12...a6

Black managed to castle before White did and this slight lead in development should have allowed him to equalize had he started to play aggressively with 12...♕b6 13.b3 ♘fe5 14.♗f2 ♕b5+ 15.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 16.♔xe2 a5 with a balanced ending.

LENNART OOTES

If needed, Nakamura and Carlsen could draw inspiration from a photo of Bobby Fischer's grave in Selfoss, Iceland.

13.♗f2 ♘fe5 14.♘d3 ♘xd3 15.♕xd3 b5 16.♕d2 ♕b7 17.0-0



We have finally arrived at a position that you quite possibly could have reached from various variations of the Sicilian, for instance. White is slightly better, as Black's central pawns and dark squares are somewhat mushy and need stability. Still, Black's position is quite playable.

17...♗f4 18.♗g3 ♗xg3 19.hxg3 ♖ac8

It seems 19...♘e5 was a bit more to the point. Magnus prophylactically stops this now.

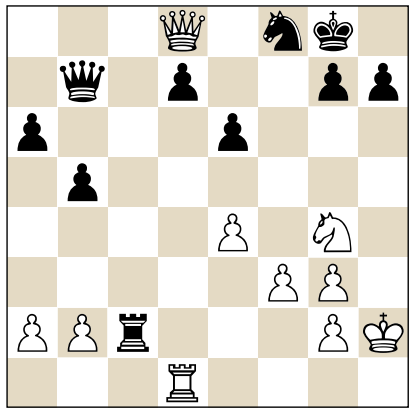
20.♘g4 ♘e7 21.♕g5

I love to move into weaknesses and would have played 21.♕d6 instantly, but White is looking to make his knight useful on g4 and puts pressure on Black on the kingside.

21...♘g6 22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♖d1 ♖c2

A gutsy, but necessary move. Black needs to engage quickly before White builds up his position with prophylactic moves such as ♔h2.

24.♕d8+ ♘f8 25.♔h2



25...♖c5? Hikaru spoils a defendable position as he decides not to go for a tactical resource: 25...♕c6! 26.♘e5 ♖xg2+ 27.♔h3 ♖h2+ when after 28.♔xh2 (28.♔g4 ♕c5 29.♘xd7 ♕h5+ 30.♔f4 e5+ 31.♔e3 ♕h6+ 32.♔d3 ♕d6+ 33.♔e3 ♕h6+ is a draw as well) 28...♕c2+ 29.♔h3 ♕xd1 30.♕e8 ♕d6! 31.f4 h6 32.a3 ♕d1 33.♕f7+ ♔h7 34.♕xf8 ♕h5+ it's a draw.

26.♖d6 26.b4 would be stronger. After 26...♖h5+ 27.♔g1 ♕a7+ 28.♘f2 Black's pieces are somehow

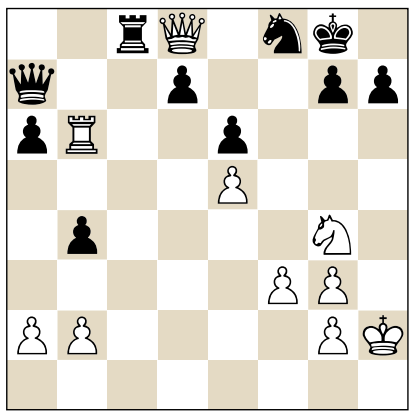
completely unconnected with each other.

26...b4 27.♖b6 ♕a7 28.e5

Magnus decides to gamble on a combination involving mating motifs with ♘f6+ and it works as Hikaru walks right into it.

28...♖c8

It was safer to play 28...♖b5, when the threat of ...h5, would force White to trade and after 29.♖xb5 axb5 30.♕e7 ♘g6 31.♕xb4 h5! 32.♕e4 hxg4 33.♕xg6 gxf3 the position would just be a draw.



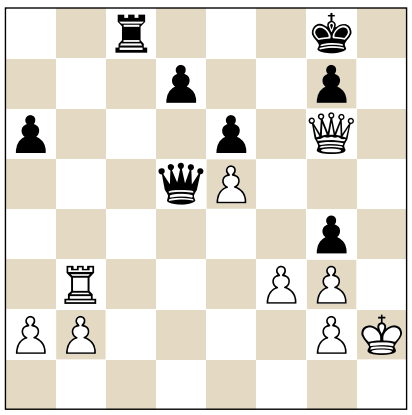
29.♕e7! The point! White had no desire to trade, as his insidious threats now indicate.

29...♘g6 The best move to continue the fight. Taking the rook would lose beautifully to 29...♕xb6 30.♘f6+ ♔h8 31.♘h5 with no defence against mate.

30.♕xb4 h5 31.♖b7 ♕c5?!

A bit inaccurate. The countershot 31...♖c4 would keep White at bay. After 32.♕xc4 ♕xb7 33.♘f2 ♘xe5 the ending is balanced.

32.♕e4 hxg4 33.♕xg6 ♕d5 34.♖b3



34...gxf3?!

It looks like taking on e5 immediately was technically better. After 34...♕xe5 35.♕xg4 ♖c2 Black's threats of ...♖xb2 and ...♕e2 equalize on the spot. White would have to 'lift' 35.fxg4 to continue the fight. But that's just inhuman.

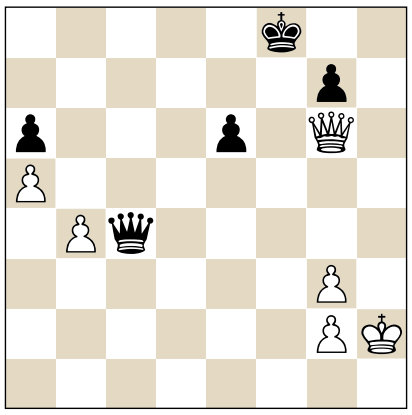
35.♖xf3 ♖f8

Forced as otherwise 36.♕f7 and 37.♖f4 lead to mate.

36.♖d3 ♕xe5

Hikaru realizes his best chances lie in the queen and pawn ending and he looks for a way to get there.

37.♖xd7 ♖f5 38.♖d8+ ♖f8 39.♖d7 ♖f5 40.♖d8+ ♖f8 41.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 42.b4 ♕e2 43.a4 ♕a2 44.a5 ♕c4

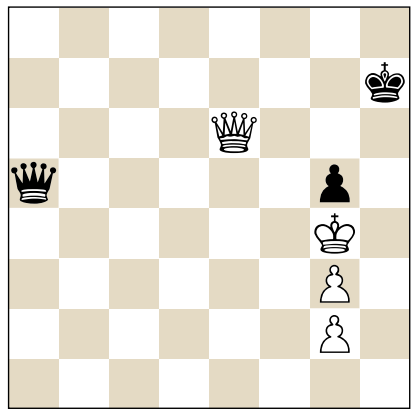


Objectively this endgame should be a draw, as the e-pawn should neutralize the potential passed pawn White has yet to create on the queenside. But in practice things are not so easy.

45.♕b1 ♔g8 46.♕e1 ♔h7 47.♕e3 ♕xb4 48.♕d3+ g6 49.♕xa6 ♕c5 50.♕b6 ♕h5+ 51.♔g1 ♕d1+ 52.♔f2 ♕d2+ 53.♔f3 g5

Hikaru is not ready to suffer forever and offers Magnus to play a queen and pawn ending with two extra doubled g-pawns. Although drawn in the tablebases, it's hard not to blunder something...

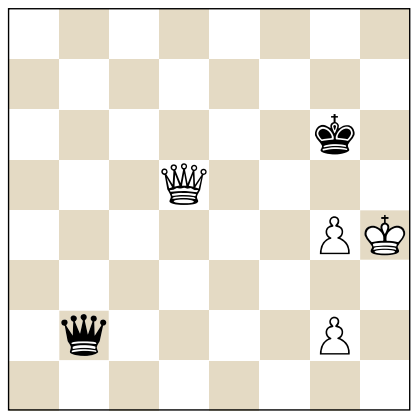
54.♕xe6 ♕xa5 55.♔g4



Black cannot save the g-pawn, but he's OK with it.

55...♕a8 56.♕f7+ ♔h8 57.♕h5+ ♔g7 58.♕xg5+ ♔h8 59.♔h3 ♕a1 60.♕d8+ ♔g7 61.♕e7+ ♔g8 62.g4 ♕c3+ 63.♔h4 ♕b2 64.♕e8+ ♔g7 65.♕d7+ ♔g6 66.♕d6+ ♔g7 67.♕d5

Black should simply move the king on the 7th rank, or keep pinning the g-pawn to stop it from advancing, but he lost focus with **67...♔g6??**



68.♕g8+ and White wins, either by trading queens or mate in one after 68...♔h6. The result is the same.

This game showed that FR can be quite intense and entertaining, but mostly when it becomes chessical. I felt I was waiting for both sides to complete development and castle until I really got into this game. ■

Baerum 2018 Fischer Random rapid

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1 Magnus Carlsen	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	0	9
2 Hikaru Nakamura	½	½	½	0	1	0	0	1	7

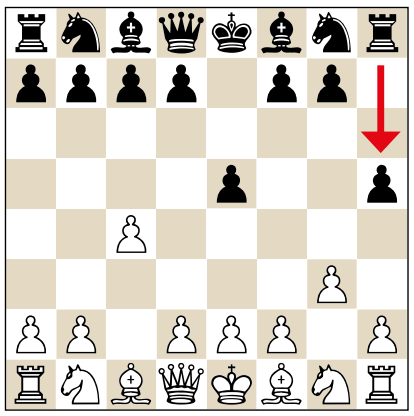
Double points for a win

Baerum 2018 Fischer Random blitz

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1 Magnus Carlsen	1	½	½	½	1	1	0	½	5
2 Hikaru Nakamura	0	½	½	½	0	0	1	½	3

When Harry meets the English

Jeroen Bosch



2...h5!?

‘A move like 2...h5 gives rise to a lot of early creativity, of course.’

1.c4 e5 2.g3

White opts for the fianchetto without further ado. This makes a lot of sense, since square d5 has been singled out as a prime target by 1.c4. For the same reason, 2.♘c3 is the main line. Many White players (wanting to fianchetto their king’s bishop anyway) postpone the development of the queen’s knight these days in view of the reply 2...♗b4 (in the style of the Rossolimo Sicilian!). As Victor Mikhalevski observes in his *Beating Minor Openings* (Quality Chess, 2016), 2.g3 owes its present popularity to Tony Kosten and Mihail Marin, who both wrote repertoire books for White based on the move order with 2.g3. Logically, 2...c6 is now a decent reply – ‘it’s square d5, stupid!’, as an American President might say to his opponent – and this is indeed the line that Mikhalevski advocates in the aforementioned tome (nearly 600 pages to combat ‘Minor Openings’!). And I am afraid that I have been guilty of combatting 2.g3 in the same sensible way. In a recent league match, one of my teammates went for a much more entertaining option. One that certainly deserves scrutiny in this column.

2...h5!?

Attaboy, that’s the spirit! The timid 2.g3 has suddenly been transformed into the proverbial red rag to a raging bull. The logic is all there – didn’t Fischer explain his strategy towards the Dragon as: open the h-file, sac, sac and mate? The English Opening is a reversed Sicilian after all!

Over the years there has been considerable GM support for hurling Harry the h-pawn forward. The likes of Richard Rapport, Ivan Sokolov and Ivan Popov are notable 2600+ adherents. A move like 2...h5 gives rise to a lot of early creativity, of course. For how should White respond?

1) Should he react by trying to prevent or prepare for ...h5-h4 with 3.h4, 3.h3 or 3.♘f3 ?

2) Should he just continue developing with 3.♘c3 or 3.♗g2 ?

3) Or should he adhere to that age-old principle that all flank attacks must be met in the centre: 3.d4 ?

All these questions will badger White after 2...h5, and each of the responses contains a certain logic. A deep theoretical survey makes no sense at all, but indications will be given concerning all of these possible answers.

Variation I

3.h4

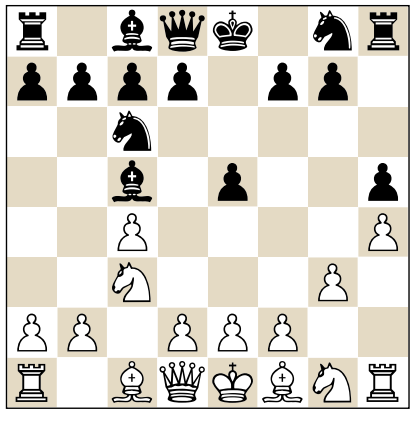
This mechanically stops the further advance of the h-pawn, and is by far the most popular reply in practice. The question now becomes: who profits most from the weakening of the neighbouring squares (g4 and g5)?

3...♘c6

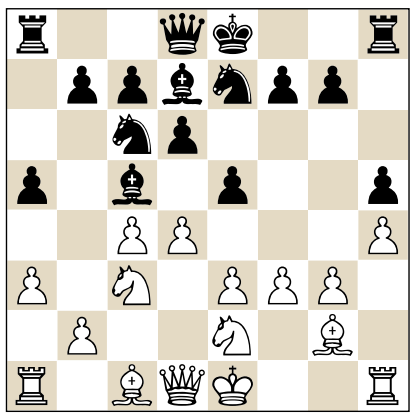
Basically, it doesn’t matter whether you play the text or go 3...♗c5 first.

It's all about the set-up that Black should adopt: ...♘c6, ...♗c5, ...d6, ...♘ge7, ...♗g4, and ...♕d7 all fit into a scheme. Note that Black doesn't fear the trade ♘b1-c3-a4xc5, since ...dxc5 will strengthen his position in the centre.

I am using the bishop move to explore a few lines in which White postpones ♗f1-g2 for a few moves: 3...♗c5 4.♘c3 (4.♗g2 ♘c6 transposes to our main line) 4...♘c6, with two options:



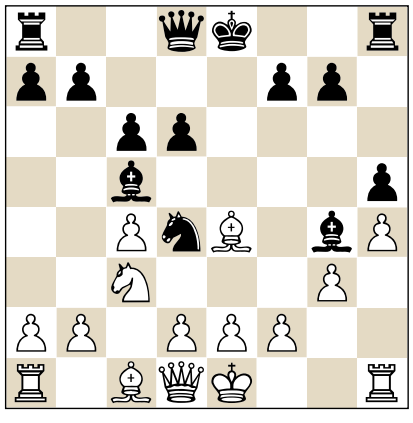
■ It makes sense to try and neutralize the a7-g1 diagonal with 5.e3. Black can still more or less follow the prescribed scheme: 5...d6 6.♘ge2 ♗g4 7.♗g2 ♘ge7 8.a3 a5 9.f3. I don't like this, although it's the only move tested in practice (9.b3 0-0 10.♗b2). 9...♗d7 10.d4 and now Black has a choice between opening the position or keeping it closed. It's a matter of taste, really, since both options are fine:



– 10...♗b6 11.d5 ♘b8 12.♖b1 a4 13.e4 0-0, and Black is up for preference (Thinius-Piorun, Deizisau 2014); the white king is awkward in the centre, and just look at that powerful bishop on b6!

– 10...exd4 11.exd4 ♗a7 12.♗g5?! 0-0 13.♕d2 a4!. Positionally strong, since taking the pawn is not advisable: 14.♘xa4? f6! 15.♗e3 ♘f5 16.♗f2 ♘cxd4! 17.♘xd4 ♖e8+ 18.♔f1 ♗xd4 19.♘c3 ♗xf2 20.♔xf2 c6, and ...♕b6+ will be hard to meet; Maksimovic-Pancevski, Skopje 2016.

■ 5.♘f3 d6 6.♘a4 ♗g4 (6...e4!? 7.♘g5 ♗f5 8.♗g2 ♘f6) 7.♗g2 e4!? (7...♘ge7). The start of a very dynamic plan – vintage Ivan Sokolov. 8.♘g5 ♘d4 9.♘c3 ♘f6 10.♘gxe4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe4 c6

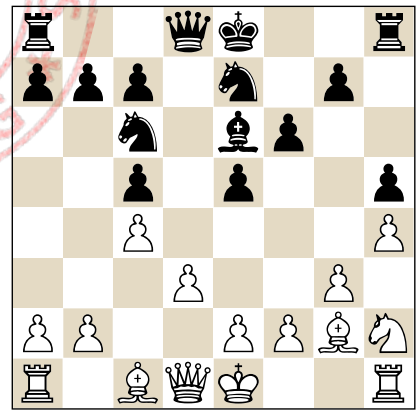


In return for the pawn, Black has an edge in development and annoying pressure. 12.d3 0-0 13.0-0?! f5! 14.♗g2 (after 14.♗f3 ♗xf3 15.exf3 Black also has 15...f4!, when 16.♗xf4? ♖xf4 17.gxf4 ♕xh4 is a winning attack) 14...f4! 15.♗xf4? (15.♔h2 ♕e7) 15...♖xf4! 16.gxf4 ♕xh4. Black is winning, and Sokolov wrapped it up rather nicely: 17.♕d2 ♖e8 18.♖ae1 ♗h3 19.♗xh3 ♕xh3 20.♘e4 ♘f5 21.e3 ♗b4! 22.♕e2 ♘h4 23.f3 ♗xe1 0-1, Ptacnikova-Sokolov, Reykjavik 2013.

4.♗g2 ♗c5 5.♘c3 d6 6.d3

After 6.♘f3 Black can just follow the scheme: 6...♘ge7 7.0-0 ♗g4 8.♘a4 ♕d7 9.♘xc5 dxc5 10.d3 f6 11.a3 a5 12.♗e3 b6 13.♖b1 ♗h3 14.♗d2 a4 15.b4 axb3 16.♖xb3 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2, and Black had acquired considerable positional plusses in Teloeken-Pieper, Germany 2018.

As mentioned, White securing the bishop pair should not worry Black: 6.♘a4 ♘ge7 7.♘f3 ♗g4 8.♘xc5 dxc5 9.d3 f6 10.♘h2 ♗e6



And now:

– 11.0-0 ♕d7 12.♗e3 b6 13.f4?! ♗h3! 14.fxe5 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 ♘xe5, with a huge positional edge for Black in Markoja-Pancevski, Skopje 2015.

– 11.a3 a5 12.♘f1 ♕d7 13.b3 0-0 14.♖b1 ♖ad8 15.♘d2 b6, and Black was doing very well in Lund-Zhou, England 2016.

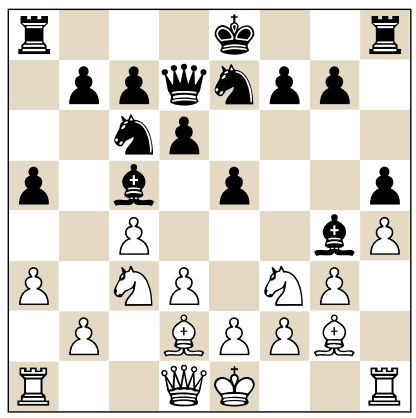
6...♗g4

Here 6...♘ge7 7.♘f3 a6!? (7...♗g4) 8.a3 ♗g4 9.b4 ♗a7 10.♗b2 ♕d7 11.♖c1 0-0 12.0-0 f5! 13.♔h2?! f4 14.♕d2 ♘f5 15.♘d5? ♗xf2! was a nice trick in D'Costa-Edouard, London 2015.

7.♘f3 ♘ge7 8.a3 a5 9.♗d2

9.♖b1 ♕d7 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♘e7 with a black edge, Rostgaard-Gretarsson, Helsingor 2016.

9...♕d7



10.♘a4 10.♖b1 f6 11.♘a4 ♔f7 12.♘xc5 dxc5 13.b3 ♖hd8 14.♗c3 ♕e6 15.♕c2 ♘f5 16.♕b2 ♘fd4 meant a slight edge for Black in Larsen-Garcia Palermo, Pinamar 2001.

10...0-0 11.♘xc5 dxc5 12.♗c3 f6 13.b3 ♖ad8 and Black had perfectly executed his development scheme, and was already to be preferred; Van der Elburg-Popov, Rhodes 2013.

Variation II

3.h3

I think Black should seriously consider **3...c6** now. In practice other moves have been tried:

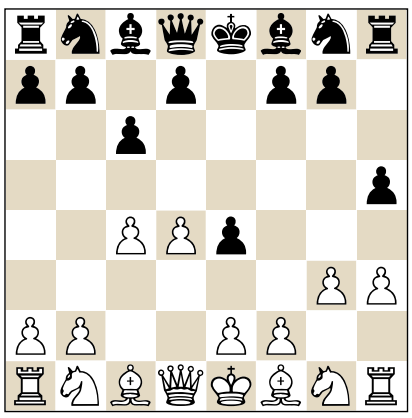
– 3...h4 4.g4 d5!? 5.cxd5 ♘f6 6.♘c3 (6.e4 c6!) 6...♘xd5 7.d3 ♘c6 8.♗g2 ♗e6 9.♘f3, Lintchevski-Chekhov, Voronezh 2015, and now 9...f6 feels like a very decent Yugoslav Attack versus the Dragon (with colours reversed, of course).

– 3...♘c6 4.♘c3 ♗c5 5.♗g2 d6 6.e3 a6 7.♘ge2 ♗a7 8.♘d5 (or 8.d4 ♗d7 9.a3 ♘ge7 10.0-0 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♕c8 12.♔h2⩲, Balla-Tadic, Arad 2014) 8...h4 9.g4 f5 10.gxf5 ♗xf5 11.b4!? ♕d7 12.♕b3 ♘f6 13.♗b2 ♘d8 14.d4 c6 15.♘xf6+ gxf6 16.0-0-0, with a slight edge, Popov-Egorov, Tyumen 2014.

– 3...♘f6 4.♗g2 c6 5.d4 e4 6.♘c3 d5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.♗g5 This is the reason why I would prefer to play this plan (...c6 and ...d5) without developing the knight to f6 first. White is slightly better now: 8...♗b4 9.♕b3 ♘c6 10.e3 ♗xc3+ 11.♕xc3 ♗e6 12.♘e2 ♕b6 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.♘f4 ♖c8 Estrada Martinez-Beznosikov, Porto 2014, and now it's not so difficult to improve upon 15.♘xe6?, as played in the game.

4.d4 e4

We have reached a theoretical position with the inclusion of h3 and ...h5. Quite often this favours Black, since White needs the h3-square to play ♘g1-h3-f4. Food for thought!



Possibilities include:

– 5.d5 cxd5 6.cxd5 ♘f6, and Black has nothing to worry, it seems.

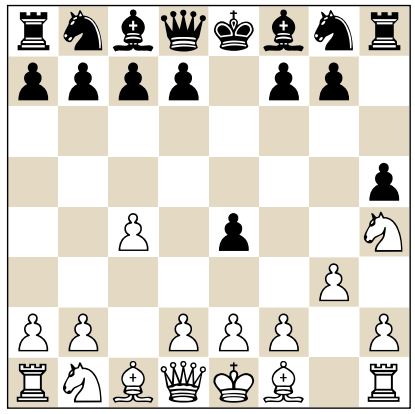
– A sharp line is 5.♘c3 d5 6.cxd5 (6.♗g2) 6...cxd5 7.♕b3 ♘c6 8.♕xd5 ♕xd5 9.♘xd5 ♘xd4 10.♘c7+ ♔d8 11.♘xa8 ♘c2+ 12.♔d1 ♘xa1. Without including 2...h5 3.h3 this is already fine for Black – Mikhalevski devotes quite some space to proving that point – here things are even better for Black: White really needs the h3-square for a piece!

– 5.♗g2 d5 6.cxd5 cxd5, and here White would really like to develop the king's knight to h3 – so much so that 7.h4 is among the engine's top choices!

Variation III

3.♘f3

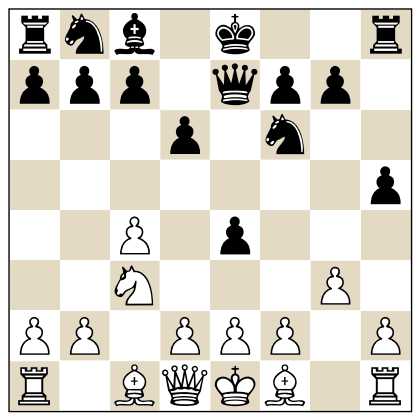
Black is provoked to go forward with **3...e4 4.♘h4!** After 4.♘d4 I like the simple 4...♘c6!, with good play for Black after 5.♘xc6 (5.♘c2 h4) 5...dxc6 6.♘c3 ♘f6. Incidentally, 4...d5, which has been tried in practice, is less clear.



4...♗e7 5.♘f5 This is the consistent move, but there is an argument for continuing to develop with 5.♘c3!? c6 (5...♗xh4 6.gxh4 ♕xh4 7.♖g1!?) 6.d3 (Black has the initiative after 6.♘xe4 d5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.♘c3 d4) 6...d5? (6...exd3) 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.dxe4 d4 9.♘d5 ♘c6 10.♗g2 ♗e6 11.0-0 ♖c8 12.♘f5, and White was winning in Englert-Hector, Ballerup 2017.

Best, however, is 5...♘f6 6.♘f5 d6 7.♘xe7 ♕xe7, which transposes to our main line.

5...d6 6.♘xe7 6.♘xg7+? ♔f8 just loses a piece. **6...♕xe7 7.♘c3 ♘f6** An interesting position. White has the bishop pair, but the 'threat' of ...h5-h4 is still looming large.



8.♗g2 8.d3!?. **8...h4! 9.d3! exd3 10.♕xd3 h3 11.♗f3 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♘e5 13.♕d1** and White was perhaps a tad better in Markowski-Andriasyan, Polanica Zdroj 2007.

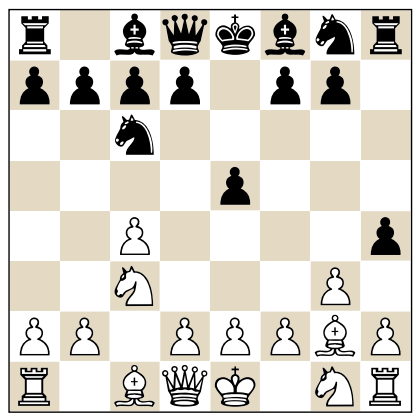
Variation IV

3.♘c3

White ignores the threat and continues his development, while Black obliges by going forward with: **3...h4**

This reminds me of an anecdote in Dutch chess circles. In a training session, a young Manuel Bosboom (later an IM who famously beat Kasparov in a blitz game in Wijk aan Zee 1999) randomly suggested the move ...h5. The trainer, GM Hans Ree, somewhat sternly remarked that grandmasters 'don't consider such moves'. Quick as ever, Bosboom's witty reply was that on the next move the pawn would be at h4, when they would have to consider it. The same here. In practice White has now most often advanced his g-pawn another square.

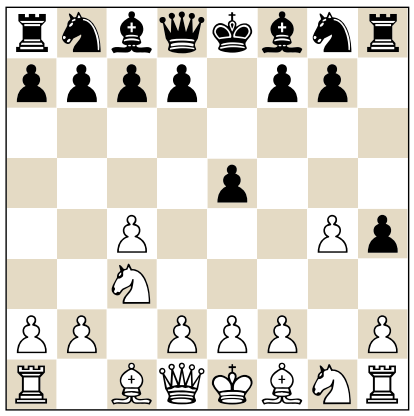
4.g4 Black has done pretty well after 4.♗g2 ♘c6:



– Ignoring the h-pawn with 5.♘f3 runs into 5...h3 6.♗f1, when 6...♘f6! looks good for Black.

– 5.♕a4 ♘f6 6.d3 ♗c5 7.a3 a5 8.♘h3 d6! 9.♗xc6+ bxc6 10.♕xc6+ ♗d7 11.♕g2 ♖b8 12.♘g5 ♗d4 13.♘d1 h3, after which Black had ample compensation for the pawn in Swinkels-Rakhmanov, Shenzhen 2011.

– 5.d3 d6 6.gxh4 (6.♘f3 h3 7.♗f1 ♗g4; 6.e3 ♘f6 7.♘ge2 h3 8.♗f3 g5!?) 6...♘ge7 7.♘f3 ♘f5 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.♗xe7 ♘cxe7 10.♕b3 c6, and Black retrieved the pawn on h4 with a slight edge; Townsend-Popov, Bilbao 2014.



I don't understand why nobody has played the normal **4...♘c6**

Other lines are more complicated:

– 4...d5!? 5.cxd5 (5.♘xd5 ♗xg4 6.♕b3 ♗c8 is unclear) 5...♗xg4 6.d4 has done well for Black in practice, but objectively White should be a bit better. Still, it looks like a fun position to play and it takes White out of his typical English comfort zone.

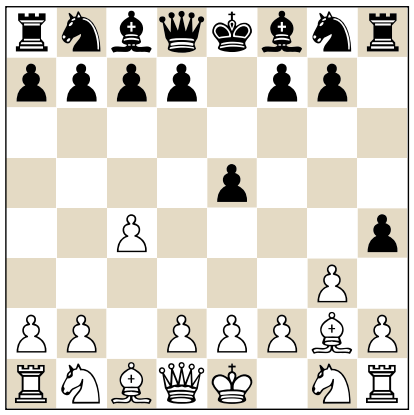
– Black was doing alright in the complications following 4...♘e7 5.♗g2 c6 6.d4 d5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.e3 ♘bc6 9.dxe5, and now 9...h3!? 10.♘xh3 (10.♗xh3 ♘xe5 11.f4 ♖xh3! 12.♘xh3 ♗xg4 13.♕a4+ ♗d7 14.♕d1 ♗xh3 15.fxe5 ♘c6∓) 10...♘xe5 11.f3 ♘7g6 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♕a4+ ♗d7 14.♕d4 ♗d6 15.♘xd5 (15.♘f4 ♖c8 16.♘xg6 ♘xg6 17.f4 ♕h4 18.h3 ♗xg4! 19.hxg4 ♘xf4! 20.♖xf4 ♕e1+ 21.♗f1 ♕g3+ 22.♗g2 is a typical computer draw) 15...♗b5 16.♗d2 (16.♖f2 ♘d3 17.♗f1 ♕h4, and White is walking on a tightrope) 16...♖c8, and Black had good counterplay in Cornelisse-Degtyaryov, ICCF email 2013. However, be warned: this complicated line is more suitable for computer-assisted correspondence play than for an over-the-board game.

– 4...♗b4 5.h3 ♘e7 6.♗g2 ♘bc6 7.♕a4 a5 8.♘d5 ♘xd5 9.cxd5 ♘e7 10.a3 ♗d6 11.d4 exd4 (11...c6?! 12.dxe5 ♗xe5 13.♘f3 ♗b8 14.♕d4 ♘xd5 15.♕xg7 ♕f6 16.♕xf6 ♘xf6 17.♘xh4!± Tikkanen-Rapport, Malmö 2013) 12.♕xd4 0-0 13.♘f3 ♘g6, White should be slightly better.

After 4...♘c6 I guess that White should just play 5.h3, since 5.♗g2 is met solidly by 5...h3!, when 6.♘xh3 d6 wins back the g-pawn, and 6.♗xh3 d6 leaves White in an awkward situation.

Variation V

3.♗g2 h4

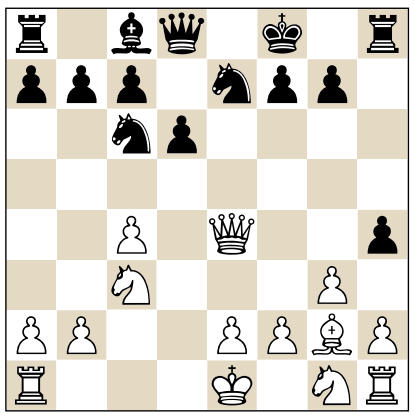


4.d4!? Here 4.♘c3 transposes to 3.♘c3 h4 4.♗g2.

4...exd4 5.♕xd4 5.♘f3 h3 6.♗f1 ♗b4+ 7.♗d2 ♗c5 is somewhat better for Black.

5...♘c6 6.♕e4+ 6.♕e3+ ♗e7 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.♘h3 d5 9.cxd5 ♗xh3 10.♗xh3 was Ibrahim-Abdel Razik, Cairo 2011, and now 10...♘b4 11.♕d2 ♘bxd5 12.♗g2 c6 is equal.

6...♗e7 7.♗g5 and now **7...♔f8!** is best (7...h3 8.♘xh3 ♘b4 9.♗xe7 ♘xe7 10.c5!± Gourlay-S.Williams, Reading 2017), when Black is fine after **8.♗xe7+ ♘gxe7 9.♘c3 d6**



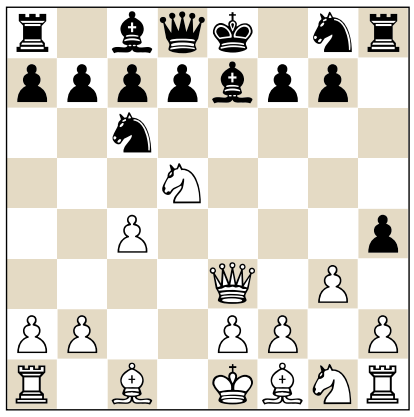
Variation VI

3.d4

The time-honoured advice to respond in the centre is misguided here.

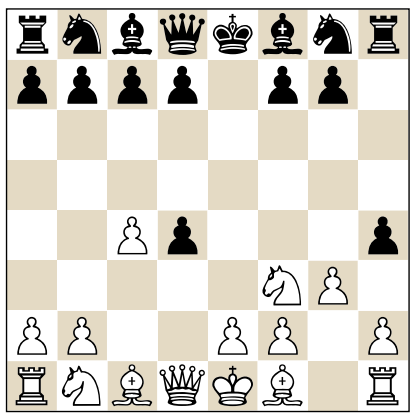
3...exd4 4.♘f3

4.♕xd4 h4 (or simply 4...♘c6) 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♕e3+ ♗e7 7.♘d5 (Galic-Jankovic, Croatia 2015)



and now the slightly surprising 7...♔f8!? makes sense (Black intends ...♘b4), when after 8.♘xe7 ♘gxe7 9.♗g2 d6 it is not entirely clear how White will complete his development: 10.♘f3 h3! 11.♗f1 ♗g4 favours Black.

4...h4!



5.gxh4

5.♘xh4 c5 may be unclear, but trading Harry for Dick is generally a favourable exchange.

5...♘c6 6.♗g5 ♗b4+ 7.♘bd2 ♘ge7 8.a3 ♗xd2+ 9.♕xd2 f6 10.♗f4 ♘f5 11.♕d3

11.c5 keeps it unclear.

11...d6 12.0-0-0 ♗e6 13.e4 dxe3 14.fxe3 ♕d7 Or 14...♘xh4 15.♘xh4 ♖xh4 16.♕g6+ ♔f8∓.

15.♗g3 0-0-0 and Black was much better due to his superior structure in Soffer-Belousov, St Petersburg 2012. ■

Levon Aronian wins in Gibraltar

Armenian prevails in play-offs after 7-way tie for first

In his first appearance in an Open in more than a decade, Levon Aronian remained sharp till the end as he won the play-offs of the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival to take home the £25,000 winner's cheque. The traditionally generous prize for the best female player, £15,000, was pocketed by Pia Cramling, one of many players who make the pilgrimage to the Caleta Hotel in Gibraltar every year. An on-the-spot report by commentator **SIMON WILLIAMS**, who never tires of explaining why Gibraltar has been voted the 'Best Open in the world'.

January is a typically bleak and dreary month of the year for most residents of England and Europe beyond. Suffering from the comedown of too much merriment over the Christmas and New Year period, villages in England are often graveyards of hangovers, full stomachs, and extremely bitter weather. What better way to escape this, then, by taking a mid-January jaunt of two weeks in Gibraltar?! A place where you can sit outside in the sun, enjoy the odd glass (or more) of sangria, and gorge on some magnificent fresh fish caught straight from the sea. The chess tournament is not all that bad either...

The Gibraltar Chess Festival is an Open Mecca for chess professionals and chess amateurs alike, with a vibe that has to be experienced first-hand, at least once in your chess playing career. At which other open tournament can a club player sit on a balcony before their game, admiring the blue sea and sandy beaches of the

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Levon Aronian's speech at the prize-giving drew a lot of laughs, including those of Brian Callaghan, the prime mover of the Gibraltar tournaments, and James Humphreys (left), the CEO of sponsor Tradewise.

southern European coast, rubbing shoulders with (and hoping for a possible pairing against) some of the great chess legends of our time? The Gibraltar Chess Festival was voted the Best Open Tournament of 2017 in a worldwide poll. It is not difficult to see why the tournament attracts a clique of returning players throughout the Elo range, and the continued attention of the usually open-shy Top 10 players. This time, there were 208 titled players in the 275-strong Masters tournament.

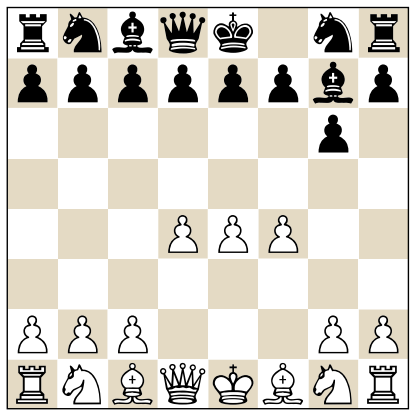
Gibraltar has that effect on people; it brings players closer, no matter their rating or title. Even after the war on the board, people gather in the evening, and players from all walks of life mingle in the bar of the Caleta Hotel. Whether it is commentary-room regular Lee Bullock (1578) who settles into the couch with his bottle of wine after the morning amateurs, or Levon Aronian (2797) who ventures on his walk along the promenade each morning, everyone fits and the Caleta provides the perfect environment to enjoy pushing the pieces around.

This atmosphere was the perfect setting for a major upset in the first round, which deservedly went on to win the 'Best Game Prize'. The white player was Gary Quillan, an English IM rated 2340; his opponent, Russian GM Daniil Dubov, rated 2694. The tale is told by the winner.

NOTES BY
Gary Quillan

Gary Quillan
Daniil Dubov
Gibraltar 2018 (1)
Modern Defence

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.f4

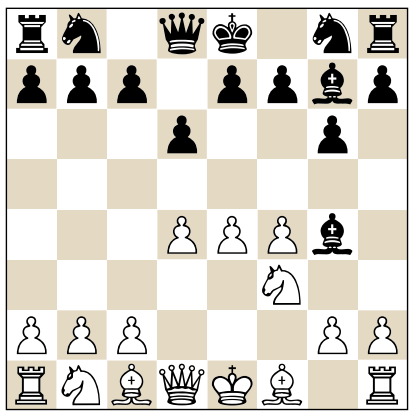


This game was played in Round 1 of this wonderful chess tournament, which often provides an opportunity for players of my strength to play a strong grandmaster. On the eight occasions I have played, I have been paired, in Round 1, against Gashimov, Georgiev, Sasikiran, Banikas, Sulskis and... Simon Williams. As we know, if you are going to take a big scalp, it is more likely to happen in Round 1, when you can catch them cold. Although beating Dubov was probably a bridge too far, I ignored the little voice in my head telling me that preparation was a waste of time, since I was going to lose anyway, and sat down over lunch with my friend Simon Williams to discuss what might happen in the opening.

As ever, Simon was very generous with his time and ideas, despite his extremely busy schedule, and he suggested that if Dubov played the Pirc/Modern, I should go for f4 instead of my usual ♗e3. We discussed some variations, but since I hadn't played f4 for 30 years, I decided to go ♗e3 and went over a few lines. However, at the board, I thought my opponent had probably done some preparation against ♗e3 and would play a quick series of moves. No doubt I would spend a long time cautiously playing my opening moves and we would reach a normal position with myself facing a huge time deficit. So I changed my mind and played f4 anyway!

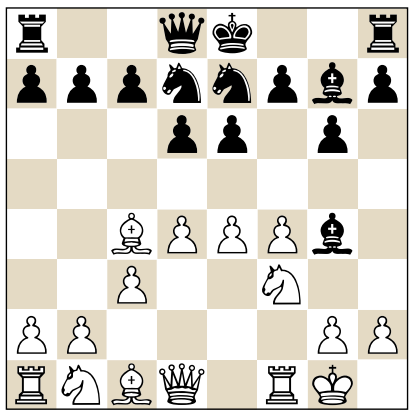
‘If you are going to take a big scalp, it is more likely to happen in Round 1, when you can catch them cold.’

3...d6 4.♘f3 ♗g4



The only familiarity I had with this position was a game against David Norwood from a weekend tournament in Manchester in 1986, but there we had knights on c3 and f6. As I looked at the board, it seemed difficult to transpose to that position in view of the pressure on d4.

5.c3 ♘d7 6.♗c4 e6 7.0-0 ♘e7



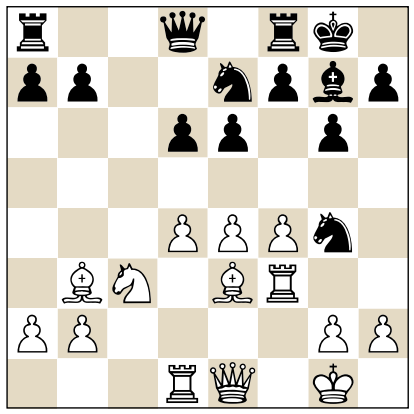
8.♕e1

My database contains nine games with the moves up to 7..♘e7, but no one has played 8.♕e1, which appears natural, unpinning the knight, temporarily preventing d5 and possibly going to h4. The most popular move has been 8.h3, but if White does manage to launch a kingside attack, that square might be useful for other pieces...

8...0-0 9.♗b3 ♗xf3 10.♖xf3 c5 11.♗e3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♘f6

12...♘c6 was also possible, when White would probably go 13.e5, without being concerned about a black knight popping onto f5. Instead, my opponent sensibly targets my dark-squared bishop.

13.♘c3 ♘g4 14.♖d1



14...♕b6

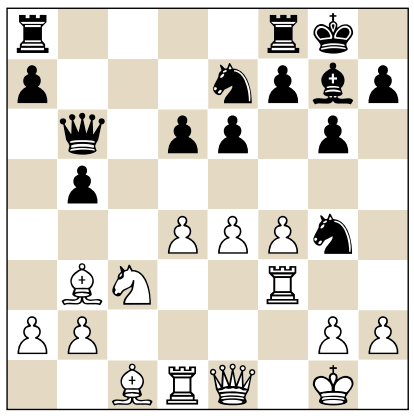
The first surprise. Dubov allows me to retain the bishop. Maybe he was concerned about over-simplifying the position after 14...♘xe3, although I'm sure there was still plenty of scope to outplay me in that position.

15.♘a4 ♕a6 16.♗c1

Back to its original square, where it is still well placed to do an effective job of threatening the black kingside.

16...b5 17.♘c3 ♕b6?

Possibly missing my next move and also missing his last opportunity to decentralise my knight with 17....b4!.

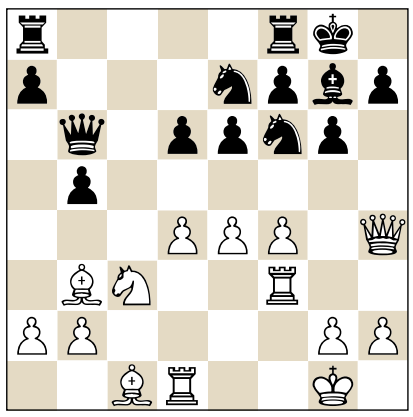


JOHN SAUNDERS

While Daniil Dubov is fully aware that he is in trouble, Gary Quillan is about to play 25.♖xh5!? 'Obviously, White must not give Black any time to consolidate.'

18.♕h4! Now I can launch an attack, which I'm very familiar with from the time I used to play the Grand Prix Attack against the Sicilian in the 1980s. The model games often saw a huge attack created against the fianchettoed black kingside, with ...f5 being played and the light-squared bishop on c4 becoming monstrous. Of course, as time evolved, Black developed more sophisticated set-ups and the Grand Prix Attack went out of fashion. Nevertheless, my memories of those model games helped me find the right moves in this position.

18...♘f6 18...♗xd4+ fails to 19.♔h1 ♘f2+ (19...♘f6 20.♖xd4! ♕xd4 21.♗e3 wins) 20.♖xf2 ♗xf2 21.♕xe7.



19.g4!

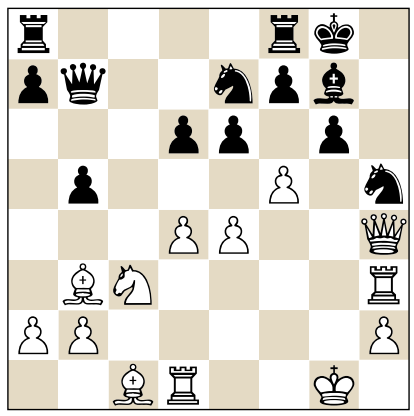
The very sporting Dubov chatted to me after the game and admitted he had underestimated this move. As well as making ...h5 less attractive to Black and supporting an f5 advance, it threatens e5, preventing the e7-knight from popping onto f5.

19...♕b7 The move I had expected, but it's already very difficult for Black. Perhaps critically, he can't play 19...b4 due to 20.e5 ♘xg4 (20...♘fd5 21.♘e4 looks very strong) 21.♘a4.

20.♖h3 h5

20...h6 is possibly a better try. White is clearly better after 21.e5, but I don't believe there is a forced sequence of winning moves, as in the game.

21.gxh5 ♘xh5 22.f5



This move is screaming to be played. In many positions after f5, Black defends by playing ...gxf5, but since this is not possible here, he has to play:

22...exf5 ... opening up the diagonal for the monstrous 'Grand Prix bishop', which proves to be fatal.

23.exf5!

I was very pleased with this slightly unnatural move, as the more obvious candidate is 23.♗g5, which isn't clear.

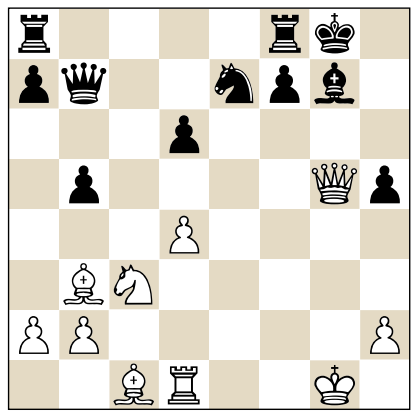
23...♘xf5 24.♕g5!

And this is the point. By forcing the e7-knight to f5, White is threatening to take on g6 and Black has no option but to waste another move playing:

24...♘e7 25.♖xh5!?

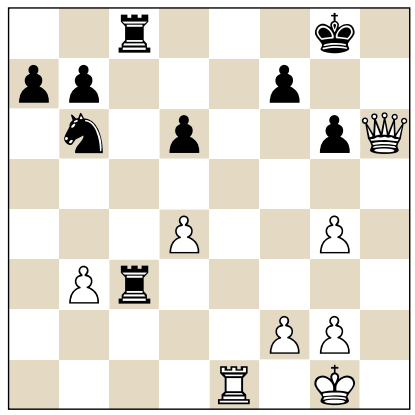
Obviously, White must not give Black any time to consolidate.

25...gxh5



26.♖d2! Aiming for the g-file.

At this stage, I had minimal time and was becoming fairly nervous. I couldn't help recalling a similar rook manoeuvre I had missed in the first round in Gibraltar in 2009.



Quillan-Gashimov
Gibraltar 2009
position after 27...♖xc3

I played 28.♖e3, and ultimately drew. Immediately after the game I was told that I had missed 28.g3, threatening 29.♔g2 and 30.♖h1. I was disgusted with myself for missing this, since I was well acquainted with the

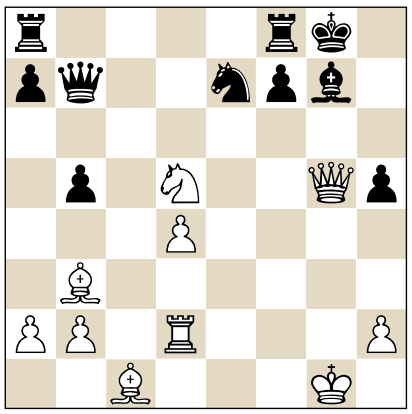
manoeuvre from Fischer-Shocron, Mar del Plata 1959 (*My 60 Memorable Games*, Game 6), which was the first game I ever studied back in 1984! That's the last time I will mention the 1980s, I promise! Therefore I was determined to find the correct rook move here. For switching my rook to the g-file, the options were ♖d3, ♔f2 and ♖d2.

26.♖d3 fails to 26...h4!.

26.♔f2 didn't feel right, although at the time I couldn't see a refutation. It turns out that 26...♕d7! would stifle White's attack.

26...d5 Desperate, but 26...♕b6 fails to 27.♕xe7 ♖ae8 28.♗xf7+.

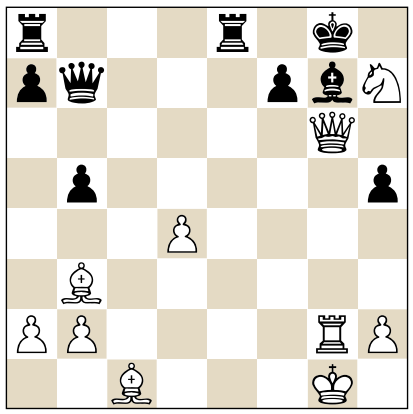
27.♘xd5



27...♖fe8

If 27...♘xd5 then 28.♖g2, and wins. And after 27...♘g6 28.♘f6+ ♗xf6 (28...♔h8 29.♕xh5+ ♗h6 30.♕xh6 mate) 29.♕xg6+ wins.

28.♖g2 ♘g6 29.♘f6+ ♔f8 30.♘h7+ ♔g8 31.♕xg6



At this point my opponent resigned (to my relief, since I was a nervous wreck by now), congratulating me on having played 'a very nice game'.

■ ■ ■

Dubov showed great sportsmanship when he congratulated and praised his opponent at the end of the game.

The chess world can be a rather selfish, insular place, but this sign of respect and humility showed that gentlemen can still be found sitting across the board. To Dubov's credit, he shook off this first round 0/1, in the later rounds finding himself in the running for first prize.

The Best Woman Prize

The jewel in the crown that sets Gibraltar apart from other chess Opens is the dedication to women players. There are a number of significant invitations available, and the prizes speak for themselves. There are no restrictions on mix-and-matching the prizes, as Hou Yifan demonstrated in 2016 when she won both the top female prize and a share of the main bounty. With £50,000 dedicated solely to the top performing women, Pia Cramling emerged as the women's prize winner this year, bagging the first £15,000 prize, and the title, for a fourth time. Pia scored the same number of points as Russia's Kateryna Lagno, but had a higher performance rating. The final standings of the women scores were are follows: Pia Cramling 6½/10 (tie-break), Kateryna Lagno 6½/10, Nino Batsiashvili, Lei Tingjie, Valentina Gunina, Ju Wenjun, Anna Muzychuk, Elisabeth Pähtz (all 6/10).

My take on the women's prizes situation is that, quite simply, it is a great initiative. Surely we should consider it as a form of 'positive discrimination'. There cannot be a better way to encourage more female participation. This undeniably adds to the attraction of the tournament as a whole. It has been noted by long-term returners of the tournament that the addition of championing women's chess has led to the general smell in the playing hall drastically improving! For a start, all the men seem to make a bit more of an effort, regularly washing and even going to the extremes of wearing deodorant and aftershave!

Ever since Pia Cramling took part in the first Gibraltar event, the Festival has been a family affair for the Swedish grandmaster.

NOTES BY
Pia Cramling

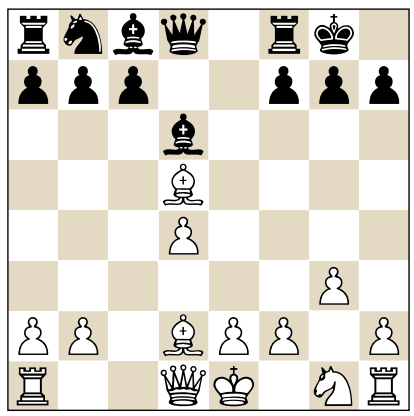
Lucas Moroni
Pia Cramling
Gibraltar 2018 (9)
Catalan Defence, Closed Variation

In the summer of 2002, Stewart Reuben invited my husband Juan and me to a new tournament which was going to be held in Gibraltar. We were living in Costa del Sol, just 100 km away, and were delighted to see an international competition in our neighbourhood. Like almost all of the time when our daughter Anna was growing up, we brought her with us, then just nine months old and with my father as babysitter. Since then we all three have been coming back to Gibraltar Chess Festival year after year. We have loved the tournament from the beginning and have seen it growing in all aspects. Anna played for the first time when she was six, in the Amateurs, when she had to write down the moves for the first time in her life, which was not easy with the beautiful wooden chessboard without letters or numbers. But the next day she got a plastic board and managed better for each game. Anna has indeed grown up with the Festival. Last year, she decided to play in the Masters for the first time, and one of her opponents was no one less a person than her dad. One of the reasons why I enjoy playing in Gibraltar so much is the fact that there are more women playing there than in any other open tournament I know. But that would not happen if the organizers did not support the female players in the way they do with a very high prize-fund and invitations for lady players. Probably all top lady players have played here at least once. 2011 was historical, when Judit Polgar made her only appearance in Gibraltar in the year that Hou Yifan finished 2nd after a play-off with Nigel Short. To have these two outstanding lady players in Gibraltar at the same time was amazing. This year we all three were happy with our results, and for me a dream was fulfilled when I won the Ladies' Prize. It happened when I least expected it. My win in Round 9 was crucial.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗d6 6.♘c3 0-0

Inspiration at the board. I wanted to avoid 6...c6 7.e4, after which White has been scoring well.

7.cxd5 exd5 8.♘xd5 ♘xd5 9.♗xd5



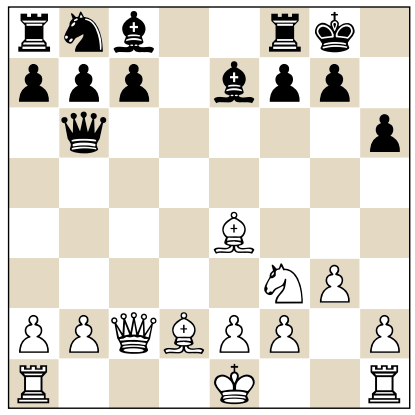
9...♗e7

In the post-mortem my opponent told me that a few days earlier, in the last round of the Tata Steel Masters, Hou Yifan had played 9...♗xg3 against Wesley So, but after 10.♕b3 ♗d6 11.♘f3 White got good play against the black king along the open g-file. I did not consider taking on g3. My plan was to exchange the d-pawns, but the ensuing position generally favours White.

10.♗e4

It seems more natural to play 10.♗g2 ♕xd4 11.♕c2 c6 12.♘f3, when Black has to go for an endgame in which White is slightly better with 12...♕c5 (as 12...♕b6 13.♘g5 is pleasant for White).

10...♕xd4 11.♕c2 h6 12.♘f3 ♕b6 I did not like 12...♕c5 because of 13.♗c3.



13.0-0

With two bishops pointing at my kingside, 13.0-0-0?! looked interesting, but would be less good, as it is easier for Black to create play against the white king than the other way around: 13...♘d7, and now:

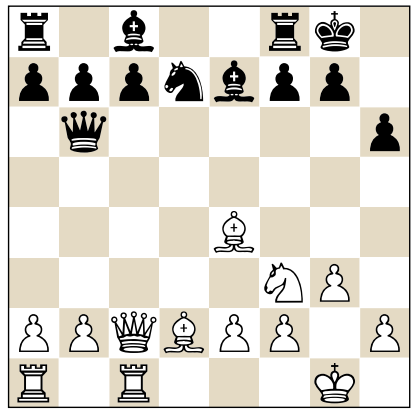
– For instance, 14.h4?! is tempting, but it is too slow: 14...♘f6 15.♗d3 (as 15.♘g5?? does not work: 15...hxg5 16.hxg5 ♘xe4 17.♕xe4 ♕c6+) 15...♗e6 16.♗e3 c5, and Black is doing well.

– 14.♗e3 ♗c5; 14.♗c3 ♘f6 15.♗d3 ♗e6.

13...♘d7 14.♖fc1

Maybe too sophisticated. As White has two open files for the rooks, it feels more natural to put them on the c- and d-files.

After 14.♖ac1 I would have played 14...♘f6! 15.♗d3 (the position is equal after 15.♕xc7 ♘xe4 16.♕xe7 ♘xd2 17.♘xd2 ♕xb2) 15...c6.



14...c6?!

An automatic reaction, but I should have kept the bishop away from the kingside with 14...♘f6! 15.♗e3 (15.♗d3 c6, and White's kingside is weakened without the bishop on g2: 16.e4 ♗h3, and Black is fine) 15...♕e6

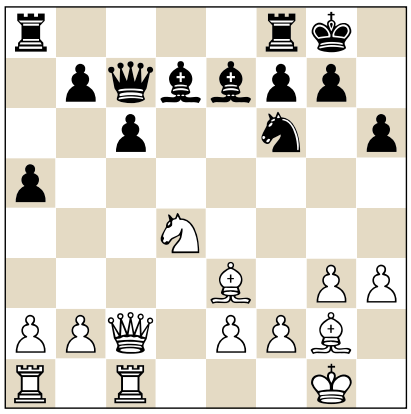
16.♗d3 c6, and again the white king is more vulnerable without the bishop on g2: 17.♘d4 ♕h3 18.f3 ♘d5.

15.♗e3 ♕c7 16.♘d4 ♘f6 17.♗g2 ♗d7

If 17...♖e8 I was worried about 18.♘xc6! bxc6 19.♗xc6.

18.h3 18.♘f5 ♗xf5 19.♕xf5 is a solid way to keep the advantage with the bishop pair. White had this possibility for some more moves but was looking for more.

18...a5



I felt it was necessary to gain space on the queenside. There is also another point behind the move (at this moment more difficult to foresee): that the rook can be activated via a5.

19.♖d1

Admitting that White was not happy with the rook he had put on the c-file.

19...♖fe8

There was no hurry with this rook move.

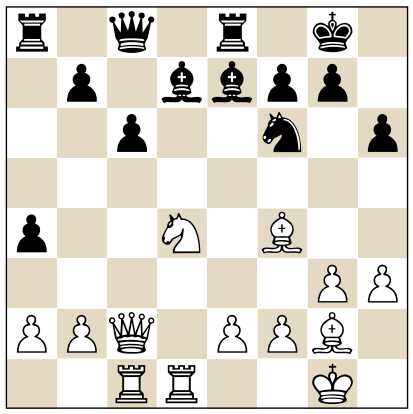
19...♕c8! avoids ♘f5, and after 20.♔h2 Black plays 20...a4.

20.♖ac1

Better was 20.♘f5! ♗f8 21.♗d4, and White maintains the pressure.

20...a4! 21.♗f4 21.♘f5 is not so strong here, as Black can win time by attacking the pawn on a2: 21...♗e6! 22.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 23.♖a1 ♗d5!, taking control of e4, and Black is doing well.

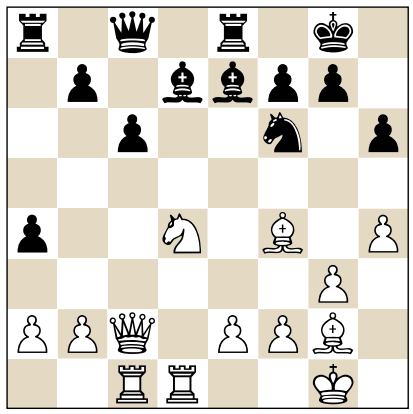
21...♕c8



22.h4 I had not expected this, since it leaves the g4-square free for Black's pieces. Now the natural plan for White to play e4, f4, e5 is no longer the same, with g4 weakened. But there was no easy choice for White.

22.♔h2 has the drawback that 22...♖a5 is annoying and then ...♖h5 is a real threat. Now 23.g4?, to stop the rook from going to h5, is too dangerous, as Black has so many pieces ready to attack the weakened white kingside. After 23...h5 24.g5 (24.♕d2 ♗d8! 25.g5 ♘d5 26.♗g3 h4 27.♗xh4 ♗c7+ 28.♗g3 ♘e3!, and Black is doing well as 29.fxe3 ♗xg3+ 30.♔xg3? loses to 30...♕c7+ 31.♔f2 ♖xg5) 24...♘d5 25.♗d2 ♗d6+ 26.♔h1 ♗xh3 Black is winning: 27.♗xa5 ♗xg2+ 28.♔xg2 ♕g4+ 29.♔f1 ♕h3+ 30.♔e1 ♗f4 31.e3 ♘xe3 32.fxe3 ♗xe3.

But 22.g4 was interesting, when Black can try the same idea of activating the rook and trying to open the kingside with 22...♖a5!?, but it would be less dangerous, now that, instead of on h2, the white king is on g1 and the g-pawn is not on g3 but on g4.



22...♗e6?!

Afterwards I was not happy with my

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move. I realized that I should have played 22...♗g4 at once.

23.a3 After 23.♘xe6 ♕xe6 24.a3, White has a slight but stable advantage due to his bishop pair.

23...♗g4 Now I was pleased with my position and there is no longer an easy way to play with the pawns in the centre for White.

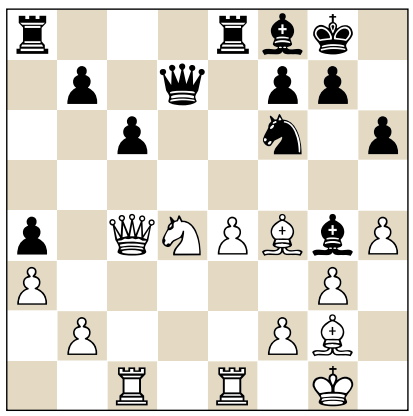
24.♕c4 The queen was better placed on c2, but we were getting low on time and it is not so easy for White to find a good plan.

24...♗f8 25.♖e1 To get out of the pin and try to play e4.

25.♖d2 ♘h5 is not what White wants to allow.

25...♕d7 26.e4

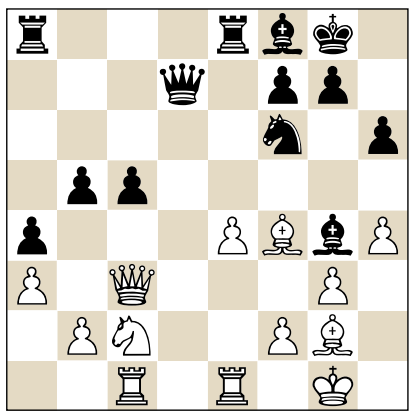
During the game I thought this was wrong, but the position is still equal.



26...b5! 27.♕c3 c5

All of a sudden Black strikes back with her pawns and improves the position on the queenside considerably.

28.♘c2? A mistake. Both 28.♘f5 and 28.♘f3 were better.



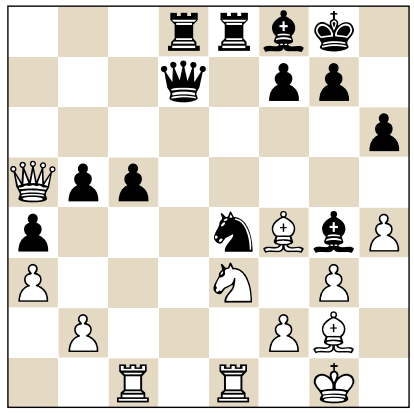
28...♖ad8?! A natural move, but not the best. 28...♘h5! and if 29.♗e3 ♗d6 was the right way, when White's pieces are awkwardly placed.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

A happy chess family: Pia Cramling with her radiant daughter Anna and proud husband Juan Bellon. And the Gibraltar Women's Champion Cup, of course.

29.♘e3? Another mistake. 29.e5 was the easiest way to keep the balance.

29...♘xe4 30.♕a5



30...♘f6??

With little time left I allow White back in the game.

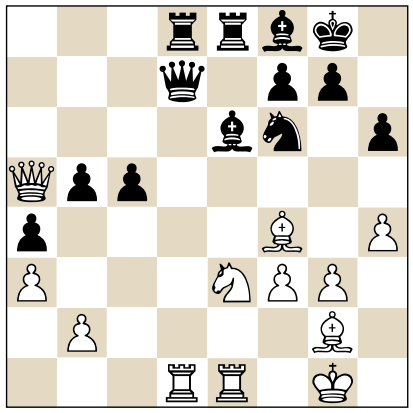
As my opponent pointed out after the game, 30...♗h5! was one of two good moves I had to choose from.

The other one was 30...♘d2!, when Black would also be better: 31.♘xg4 ♘b3! 32.♕b6 ♕xg4 33.♕xb5 (33.♖b1 ♘d4) 33...♘xc1 34.♖xe8 ♖xe8 35.♕xe8 ♘e2+ 36.♔h2 ♘xf4 37.♕xa4 ♗d6.

31.f3? Missing his chance.

31.♘xg4 ♘xg4 was my plan, but I did not realize that after 32.♗f3! White will not only get the pawn back, but he will also keep the bishop pair and the better position.

31...♗e6 32.♖cd1



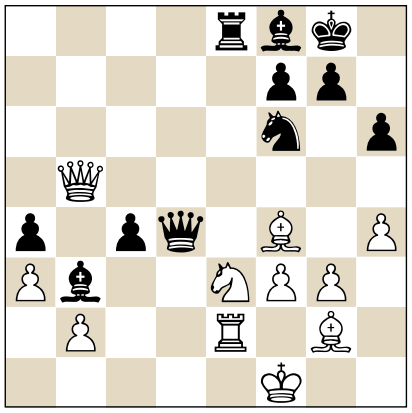
32...♕c8 32...♘d5! would have maintained my extra pawn.

33.♕xb5 Wins back the pawn, but Black has a good position: all pieces are active and well placed.

33...♗b3 34.♖xd8 ♕xd8 35.♖e2 ♕d4 In case of 35...♘h5 White has 36.♗c7!.

36.♔f1 36.♔h2 runs into 36...♗c4!.

36...c4



Cutting off the queen from the defence and creating a target on a3 after Black plays ...c4-c3. White is lost.

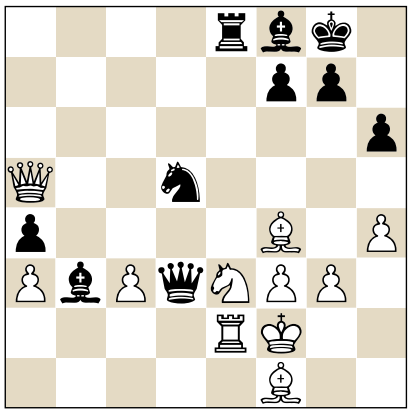
37.♕a5 c3 38.bxc3 38.♕xc3 ♕xc3 39.bxc3 ♗xa3, and the a-pawn will probably decide the game.

38...♕d3 Threatening 39...♗c4.

39.♔f2 ♘d5

Not 39...♗c4? because of 40.♗f1.

40.♗f1



40...♘xf4 Even stronger was 40...♘xc3!, when there are no good squares for the rook: 41.♖e1 ♕d2+, and White loses the queen.

Or 41.♖b2 ♕d4, and there is nothing against the threat ♘d1+.

Or 41.♖c2 ♘d1+! 42.♔g1 ♕d4.

41.gxf4 ♕d6 After 41...♗xa3??, 42.♘c4! was a nice tactic that would have put Black in big trouble.

41...♖c8 was also strong.

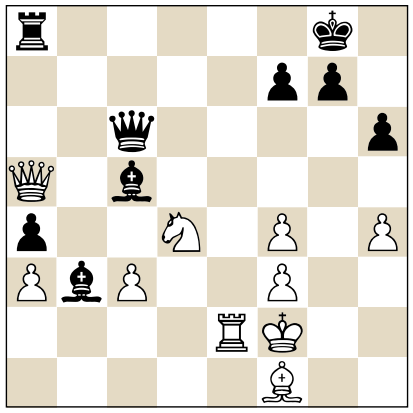
42.♔g3 ♕g6+ 43.♔f2 ♕f6 44.♔g3 ♕g6+ 45.♔f2 ♕c6

Preparing the decisive pin ...♗c5.

46.♘f5 After 46.♔g2 ♗xa3 would be the easiest.

46...♗c5+ 47.♘d4 Necessary, as 47.♔g2 ♖a8 traps the queen.

47...♖a8



White resigned. After 48.♕b4 Black can choose between 48...♗xb4 49.♘xc6 ♗xa3 50.♘b4 ♗xb4 51.cxb4 a3 52.♖e1 a2 53.♖a1 ♖a4 54.b5 ♖xf4 or 48...♕d5 49.♖e5 (forced) 49...♗xb4 50.♖xd5 ♗xd5 51.cxb4 ♖c8, and wins.

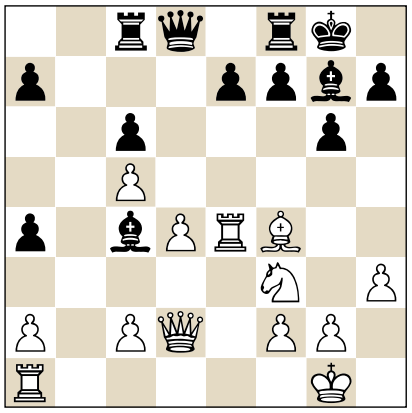
■ ■ ■

The high ratio of mixed genders in Gibraltar naturally leads to the famous fun and light-hearted evening events, particularly 'The Battle of the Sexes', hosted by tournament director Stuart Conquest and interviewer Tania Sachdev, which sees teams of women and men battling against each other on a giant chess board. The top players make up the teams, with the eventual winner of the competition, Levon Aronian, leading the men.

Aronian came through the competition with a bang at the end. He shone brightest in the play-offs that resulted from a pretty massive tie for first place. Seven players in total reached the top score of 7½/10, but as the rules of the tournament limit play-off positions to the top four performance tie-breaks, players 5-7 on the top score – Le Quang Liem (Vietnam), Mickey Adams (England), and Nikita Vitiugov (Russia) – were duly eliminated.

This left the eventual 2018 winner Levon Aronian, previous four-time winner Hikaru Nakamura, the ever imaginative Richard Rapport and everybody's favourite Frenchman, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, to face off in a series of rapid and blitz games. Levon Aronian progressed to the semi-final by knocking out Richard Rapport in the rapid, whilst Vachier-Lagrave and Hikaru Nakamura fought tooth and nail in pairs of both rapid and blitz matches, with Vachier-Lagrave emerging victorious in the final blitz game, knocking out four-time winner Nakamura and ending his chances of a fifth victory. The final play-off match saw more fighting chess, with Aronian and Vachier-Lagrave drawing both of their 10/2 rapid games and their first 3/2 blitz game. The second blitz game clinched Aronian the title, and the £25,000 first prize.

Levon Aronian
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Gibraltar 2018 (tiebreak 2.4)



position after 18...♗c4

Aronian has a nice advantage, which he now turns into an attack.

19.♗h6

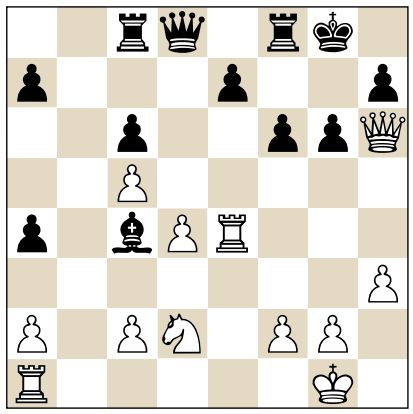
Aiming for the black king. With ideas of ♖h4 hanging in the air, Vachier-Lagrave must proceed with care.

19...♗xh6?!

This is an inaccuracy that leaves Black struggling. MVL should have tried 19...♗d5, aiming to exchange the dangerous knight on f3. I expect he rejected this variation in view of 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 (20...♗xe4 21.♗xf8 ♕xf8 22.♘e5 is very pleasant for White) 21.♖h4 h5 22.♘e5, which looks very scary, especially in a blitz game. I am sure that with some extra time MVL would have found 22...f6

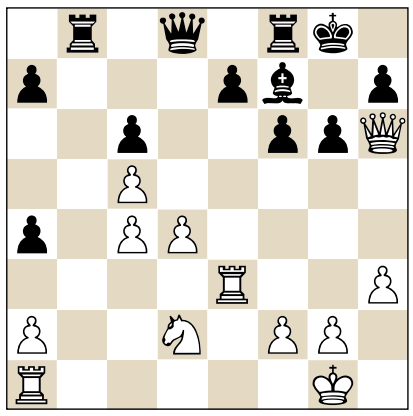
23.♘d3 g5! here, which gives Black the advantage after 24.♖xh5 ♗f7.

20.♕xh6 f6 21.♘d2



Black's king will remain a target for the rest of the game.

21...♗d5 22.♖e3 ♖b8 23.c4 ♗f7

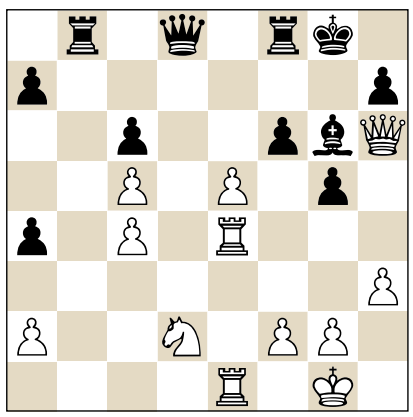


24.♖e4 Threatening ♖h4. 24.♖ae1 was also good.

24...g5 25.♖ae1 e5 25...♖b7 was playable, but Black is horribly passive and White can increase the pressure by introducing 'Harry' into the mix: 26.h4! ♗g6 27.♖e6 ♗f7 28.hxg5! ♗xe6 29.♖xe6 ♖f7 30.♖xc6, with a clear advantage for White.

26.dxe5 ♗g6

26...♕xd2? runs into 27.exf6.



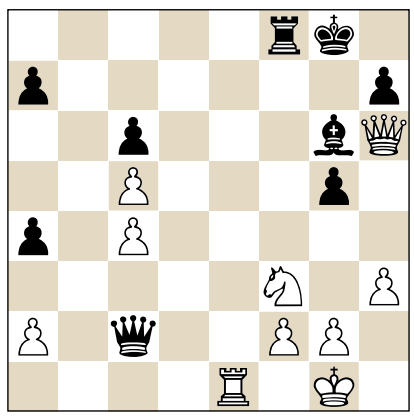
27.♖4e2

Simple and good. Black's king has too much air blowing on it. This, combined with excellent piece play for White, equals disaster.

27...♖b2 28.♘f3

Good enough, but 28.exf6! was even better. The e4-square is what the white knight is longing for: 28...♕xf6 29.♘e4.

28...♖xe2 29.♖xe2 fxe5 30.♖xe5 ♕d1+ 31.♖e1 ♕c2



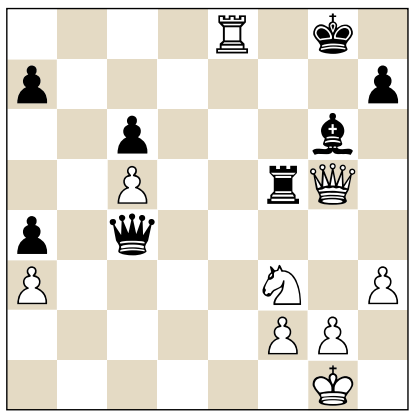
32.a3!? Not allowing any counterplay; a wise practical decision. With more time on the clock, White would probably have gone for 32.♕xg5 ♕xa2 33.h4! ♕xc4 34.h5.

32...♕xc4?!

32...♖f5!, guarding g5, would have been a better defensive idea.

33.♕xg5 ♖f5 34.♖e8+!

Moving in for the kill.



34...♔g7 34...♖f8 would have shown just how well the queen and knight can dance together: 35.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 36.♕f6+ ♗f7 37.♘d4!.

35.♕e7+ ♔h6 36.♕e3+ ♕f4

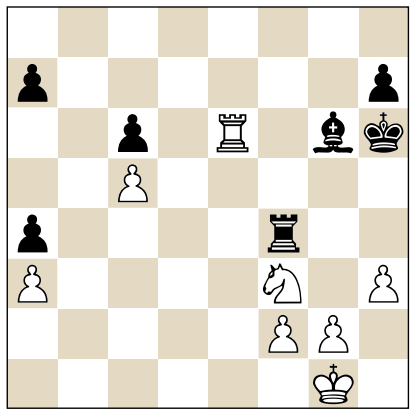
Aiming to ease the suffering by exchanging queens. This it does, but the bad news is that the endgame is also hopeless. 36...♔g7 allows the white knight back into the fray: 37.♘d4!.

37.♕xf4+ ♖xf4 38.♖e6

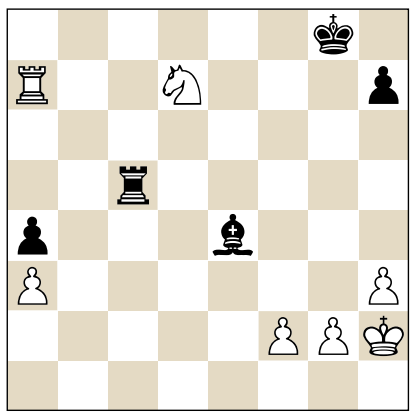
White just needs to hoover up the remaining black pawns now.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

And once again Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Levon Aronian were pitted against each other in a playoff. As in the Tbilisi World Cup, the Armenian won.



38...♖c4 39.♖xc6 ♔g7 40.♘e5 ♖c1+ 41.♔h2 ♗e4 42.♖a6 ♖xc5 43.♖xa7+ ♔g8 44.♘d7
The rest is academic.



44...♖f5 45.♖xa4 ♗c6 46.♖g4+ ♔f7 47.♘b8 ♗b7 48.f3 ♖b5 49.♖b4 ♖xb4 50.axb4 1-0.

A great win for Aronian, but I did feel a tinge of sadness for MVL, who has made his way into the playoff on a number of occasions and is yet to lift the title. Hopefully his time will come...

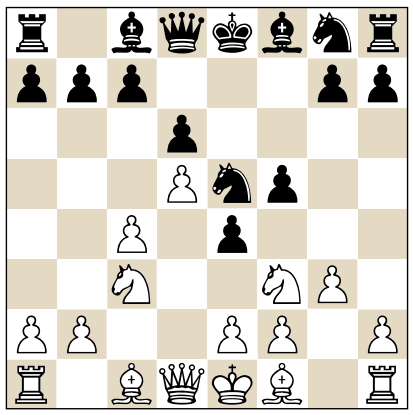
Aronian was gracious and witty as ever at the closing ceremony, giving a speech that drew a lot of laughs. He notably stated that he had developed, 'a new-found level of respect for Hikaru, for his achievement in winning this tough tournament for the last three years.' The last time Lev played an Open was some 13 years ago... in Gibraltar 2005, of all places! There he also finished in a five-way tie for first prize, and thus the play-off rules were born.

One of his finest efforts was his Round 7 win against Nigel Short, which we present with notes by Lev's friend and trainer Ashot Nadanian.

NOTES BY
Ashot Nadanian

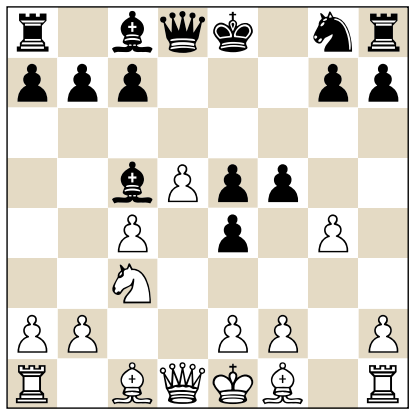
Levon Aronian
Nigel Short
Gibraltar 2018 (7)
English, Three Knights System

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.♘f3 f5 4.g3 ♘c6 5.d4 e4 6.d5 ♘e5
This move was a Nigel Short novelty in 1995, used against Joel Lautier in Dortmund. Before that game Black preferred to take on f3.
After 6...exf3 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.exf3 White's position is better. The plan is to play f4 and ♗g2 in order to put pressure on c6, followed by 0-0, ♖e1, ♕d2, b3, ♗b2.

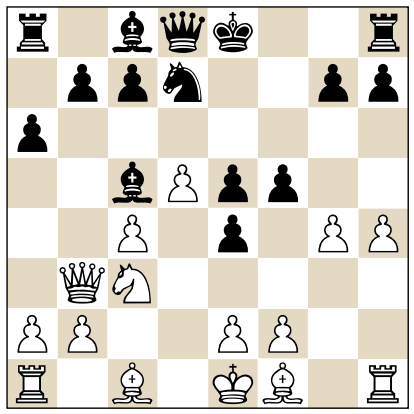


7.♘xe5
In the above-mentioned game, Lautier played 7.♘d4, which was met by 7...h5!? (Short has always been a very creative player) 8.f3?! h4 9.♗g2?! h3 10.♗f1 ♘f6, and Black got a very good position. White should have played 8.h4 instead, with a better position. In 2008, at the Dresden Olympiad, instead of the risky pawn push, Short played the restrained 7...♘f6 against Izoria and won a very good and instructive game.
7...dxe5 8.g4
This nice right hook is Levon Aronian's invention, which he first used against Ivanchuk in the YourNext-Move Blitz 2017 tournament. Now Black's centre is subjected to a serious attack.
8...♗c5 A new move.
An interesting attempt is 8...♕h4 9.♕b3 ♘f6.

The game Aronian-Ivanchuk, 2017, went 8...g6 9.gxf5 gxf5 10.♖g1, and White had a clear advantage.



9.♕b3!
A multi-purpose move. White not only creates the one-move threat 10.♕b5+, but also frees the d1-square for the knight in order to neutralize Black's queen thrust to h4 with ♘d1, followed, if necessary, by a transfer of the queen to g3.
9.b4 would be a blank in view of 9...♗d4.
9...♘f6
After 9...c6 10.gxf5 ♕h4 11.♘d1 (11.e3 ♘h6) 11...♘e7 12.♕g3 White is better.
10.♕b5+ ♘d7 11.h4!
In case of 11.gxf5?! ♕h4 12.♘d1 0-0, Black scuppers the white initiative.
11...a6 12.♕b3



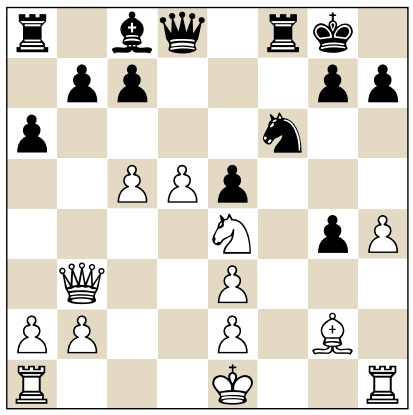
12...e3!
A typical approach! The pawn triangle e5-f5-e4 cannot be maintained, so Black decides to inflict maximum damage in return. White's doubled pawns on the e-file will prevent him from coordinating his forces. The queen, for example, will have trouble going to the kingside

(due to the pawn on e3), and the bishop will find it hard to develop effectively (due to the pawn on e2). So it's as if the e2- and e3-pawns are cutting White's position in two.

13.♗xe3 ♗xe3 14.fxe3 fxg4 15.♘e4

15.♗g2 was also possible.

15...♘f6 16.♗g2 0-0 17.c5



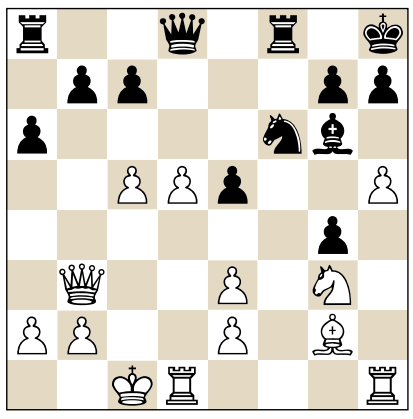
17...♔h8

Not, of course, 17...♘xd5?? in view of 18.♘c3 c6 19.e4.

18.0-0-0 ♗f5?!

Right up White's street. Black should have gone 18...♕e7! 19.d6 cxd6 20.cxd6 ♕e6.

19.♘g3 ♗g6 20.h5



20...♘xh5!?

It seems that when playing 18...♗f5, Black had already decided on this sacrifice, overestimating his compensation for the piece.

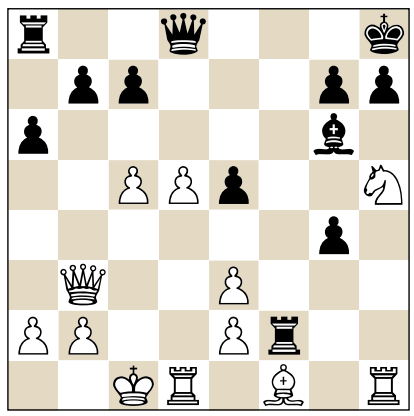
20...♗f7 21.h6 gxh6 22.♖xh6 ♗g6 23.♖dh1 ♔g7 24.e4 would give White a large advantage.

21.♘xh5 ♖f2 22.♗f1

A slightly passive move. Instead, 22.♖h2! ♖xe2 23.♘g3 ♖c2+ (23...♖f2 24.♖d2) 24.♕xc2 ♗xc2 25.♔xc2 was stronger.

SOPHIE TRIAY

The 'Battle of the Sexes' remains one of the highlights during the Gibraltar Festival. This time the men's team was led by Levon Aronian.



22...♕f8!

A double attack. Black not only wants to take on c5 but, more importantly, creates the threat 23...♗xh5 24.♖xh5 ♖xf1.

23.♘g3 This is forced.

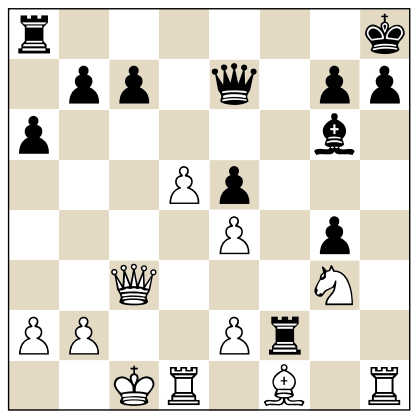
23...♕xc5+ 24.♕c3 ♕e7

The alternative was 24...♕d6 25.e4 (after 25.♖g1 e4! White cannot develop the bishop) 25...♖af8 26.♔b1 b5, when White is better, but would need to work hard to convert his advantage.

25.e4

The drawback of this move is that it restricts White's options.

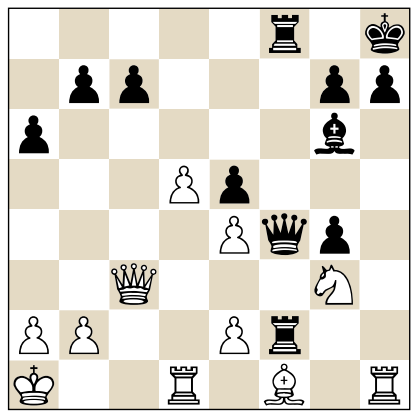
Instead, 25.♖g1, with the idea of 26.♗g2, followed by 27.♗e4, would have been better.



25...♕g5+ The white king does not feel very comfortable on c1, so driving it to a safer place made no sense. Better was 25...♖af8 26.♔b1 h5, with some counterplay for Black.

26.♔b1 ♕f4 27.♔a1 ♖f8

After 27...♗xe4 28.♖g1 Black is left with no chances.



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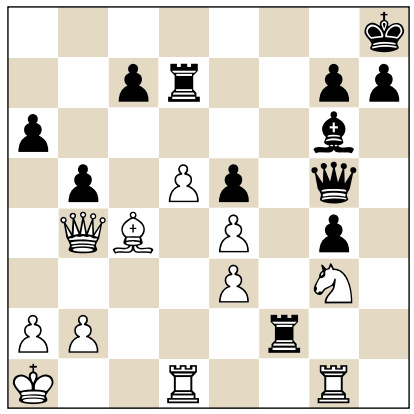
28.♖g1 A good consolidating move. Now White is not only threatening 29.♕xc7, but also has the move e3, freeing his bishop.

28...♖f7 28...♗xe4 won't help in view of 29.e3 ♕f7 30.♘xe4 ♖xf1 31.♘g5, and White wins.

29.e3 ♕g5 30.♗c4

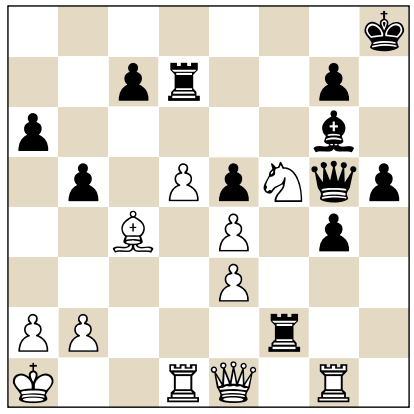
The bishop is finally developed, so White had every reason to feel relieved and to stop worrying about the outcome of the game.

30...♖d7 31.♕b4 b5



32.♘f5! This move greatly impressed the remarkable chess composer Karen Sumbatyan, with whom I have been exchanging friendly e-mails for many years. Blocking off the f2-rook, White is threatening mate in one.

32...h5 33.♕e1!



And now it becomes clear that 32.♘f5! not only blocks Black's rook, but also confines it to its camp. The game is over.

33...♖f3 Or 33...♖h2 34.♕g3.
34.♗e2 ♖h3 35.♗f1 ♗xf5 36.♗xh3 ♗xe4 37.♗g2 ♗xg2 38.♖xg2 h4 39.♕b4 Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

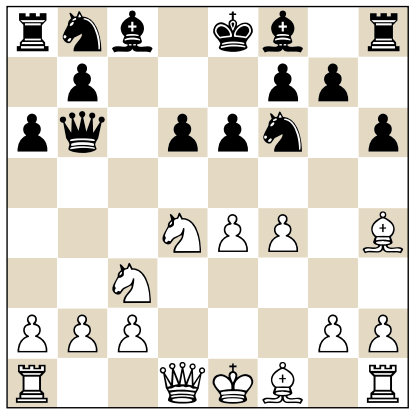
The Poisoned Pawn

My view of the tournament for the past eight years has been from behind the commentary desk, briskly discussing the chaos that erupts upstairs. This year, for the second time, my co-commentator was the lovely Jovanka Houska. Besides the chess, we had a lot of fun discussing what the title of her next 'erotic thriller' could be (at least I did!). If you were not aware, Jovanka co-wrote the chess-themed *The Mating Game* (with James Essinger), a novel that perhaps a number of chess players can relate to...

One game in particular that Jovanka and I had much fun analysing was this brilliant, if chaotic, game from Najdorf expert Ivan Cheparinov.

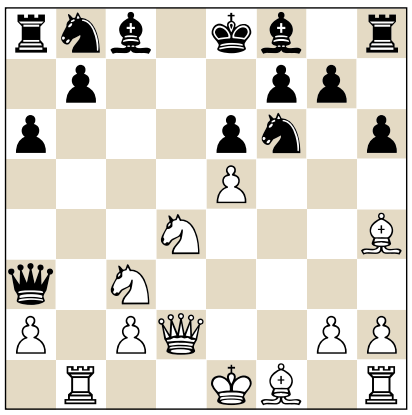
Alan Pichot
Ivan Cheparinov
Gibraltar 2018 (5)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 h6 8.♗h4 ♕b6

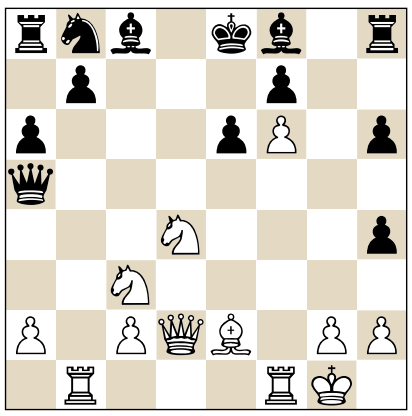


The 'Poisoned Pawn' variation of the Najdorf, a fascinating and extremely complex opening. It is advised that before entering such an opening, a player should be well versed in a load of theory! Cheparinov mentioned afterwards that Pichot had not played many games with this variation, suggesting that he might not have been so well prepared. On the other hand, Cheparinov has worked as Topalov's second, no doubt spending some time analysing these positions.

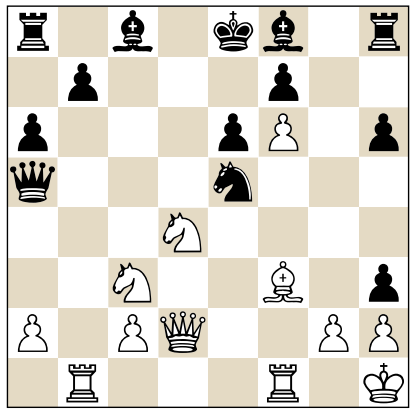
9.♕d2 ♕xb2 10.♖b1 ♕a3 11.e5
A critical move, opening up the position. This has been played in the majority of cases, but my computer does not approve, preferring an approach with f5. Saying that, e5 is a very 'human' move.
11...dxe5 12.fxe5



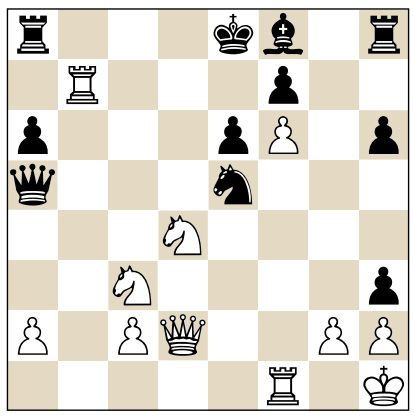
12...g5!?
12...♘fd7 leads to a position that has been seen in over 300 games in my database, so it is a serious alternative.
13.exf6 gxh4 14.♗e2 A very interesting position. It transpires that the black pawn on h4 gives Black a number of extra tactical opportunities.
14...♕a5 The black queen can now consider transferring over to some useful dark squares, mainly e5 and g5.
15.0-0



15...h3!
I like this move, as now the white king will also start feeling a bit exposed.
16.♗f3 ♘d7 16...hxg2 would encourage 17.♖fe1!, when White's pieces are ready to pounce.
17.♔h1 Logical. The entertaining 17.♘d5 was an interesting option, for example, 17...♕xd2?? (but 17...♕c5!, and it is not clear how White should continue) 18.♘c7+ ♔d8 19.♘dxe6+ fxe6 20.♘xe6+ ♔e8 21.♗h5 mate.
17...♘e5

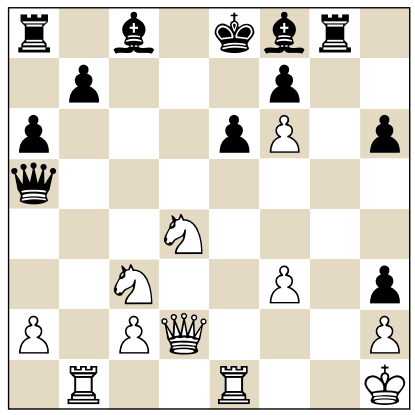


18.♖fe1 18.♗xb7 was an option, leading to very complex variations. For example, after 18...♗xb7 19.♖xb7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Black must find the correct move. But after 19...♖d8! Black can be very happy with the way the opening has turned out.
After 19...hxg2+?!, 20.♕xg2 ♕xc3 21.♘xe6! is very messy, after which White's chances shouldn't be underestimated.
19...♗b4? was a move that gave us a lot of entertainment in the commentary room. After 20.♘c6! ♗xc3 (20...♘xc6?? 21.♕d7+ ♔f8 22.♕xf7 mate) White would have to find 21.♕d6! hxg2+ 22.♔g1!! – a truly bizarre move. But White quickly escapes the checks, and the black king will be the one to fall: 22...gxf1♕+ 23.♔xf1, and White wins.
18...♘xf3 19.gxf3 ♖g8!?
19...♕g5 was a safer option.



20.♘xe6?!

SOPHIE TRIAY

'Poisoned Pawn specialist' Ivan Cheparinov and his girlfriend Antoaneta Stefanova enjoy the relaxed atmosphere at the closing dinner.

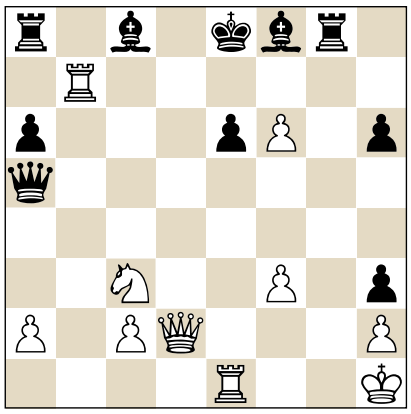
Pichot, already short of time, goes for the kill. The tactics are not quite there though. A more restrained approach would have been
20.♕d3!, aiming to simply continue with f4-f5, after which any result is possible.

20...fxe6

20...♗xe6?? allows the pretty 21.♖xb7, with the deadly threat of 22.♖xe6+, for example: 21...♖d8 22.♖xe6+ fxe6 23.f7 mate.

21.♖xb7

This was White's idea, banking on an attack on the light squares. Black now has to be very careful.



21...♖g1+!!

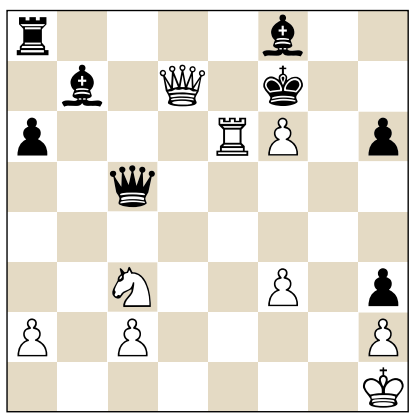
A fantastic way to continue! The black rook was a mere hindrance on g8, from where it blocked an escape square for the black king. This 'defensive' move was the only option; everything else would have lost.

After 21...♗xb7? 22.♖xe6+ ♔f7 23.♕d7+ the king has to walk into the open, since the g8-square is covered – the main difference with the actual game continuation: 23...♔g6 24.f7+ ♔h5 (24...♔h7 25.fxg8♕+ ♔xg8 26.♖g6+ ♔h8 27.♕f7) 25.fxg8♕ ♗xf3+ 26.♔g1 ♗c5+ 27.♔f1 ♖xg8 28.♕f7+ ♔g4 29.♕xg8+, and this will end in checkmate for the black king: 29...♔f4 30.♕g3+ ♔f5 31.♕e5+ ♔g4 32.♖g6+ ♔h4 33.♕f4+ ♔h5 34.♕xh6 mate.

22.♔xg1

After 22.♖xg1, 22...♗xb7 will win for Black.

22...♕c5+ 23.♔h1 ♗xb7 24.♖xe6+ ♔f7 25.♕d7+



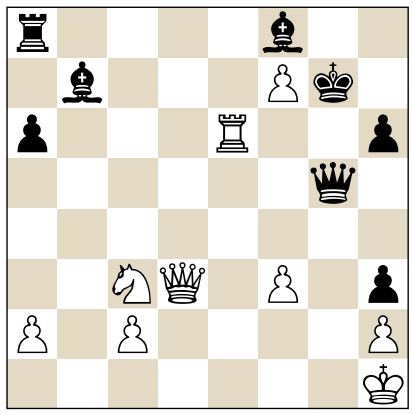
25...♔g8!

Now that there is no rook on g8, the black king finds a safe haven.

26.f7+ ♔g7!

26...♔h8? looks safe but is actually a horrible mistake: 27.♕xb7 ♕f2?? (27...♕g5, with equality, is better) 28.♖g6!, and there is no mate for Black.

27.♕d3 ♕g5



SOPHIE TRIAY

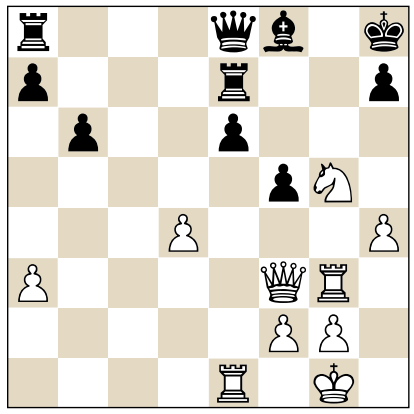
Vassily Ivanchuk, lost in thought in the bar area of the Caleta Hotel, where there would always be admirers to welcome him or, if need be, cheer him up.

Everything is covered and the game is over. **28.♕d4+ ♔xf7** White resigned.

■ ■ ■

The 'defensive' shot 21...♖g1+!! was one of the most spectacular moves of the tournament. Ideas such as this are quite rare, but a similar idea did occur in another great game. This time Indian GM Gupta showed some attacking prowess against the legendary Vassily Ivanchuk.

Abhijeet Gupta
Vassily Ivanchuk
Gibraltar 2018 (8)



position after 28.♕f3

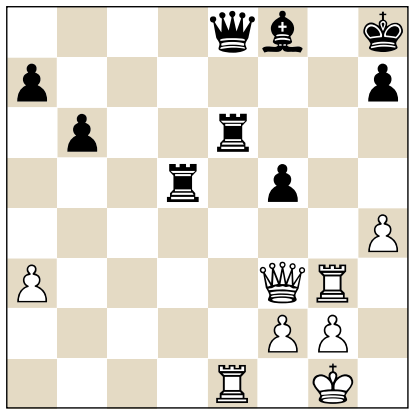
28...♖d8 We pick up the game after Black's 28th move. This is the infamous game that left 'Chucky' feeling somewhat dejected (see further on). All credit must

be given to Gupta, though, who conducted a fantastic attack.

29.d5! Opening up lines and diagonals that accentuate just how exposed the black king on h8 is.

29...♖xd5 29...exd5 fails to 30.♖xe7 ♕xe7 31.♕xf5 ♖d7 32.♖e3! ♕g7 33.♖e8 ♔g8 34.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 35.♕xd7. And 29...e5 is paramount to resignation: 30.♕xf5 ♖xd5 31.♖f3.

30.♘xe6! ♖xe6



31.♖g8+!! Just like in the Cheparinov game! Yet again, for a very concrete tactical reason: the black king is subjected to a deadly pin.

31...♔xg8 32.♕xd5 ♕b5

32...♔f7 loses to 33.♕xf5+ ♖f6 34.♕xh7+.

33.♕xe6+ ♔g7 34.♖d1 1-0.

I love 'common themes', such as ♖g1/g8/b1/b8. I find these patterns much more entertaining and valuable as a form of learning than memorising infinite lines of opening theory.

A legend walks in

The bar area of the Caleta Hotel is the beating heart of the tournament. So many stories have passed through this place over the years. Some can be written down, and some are best left forgotten... A legendary story which illuminates the essence of Gibraltar occurred during the latter stages of this year's competition. Round 8 had finished some hours ago, and as is custom players were congregating in the bar area for the tournament's famed social evening. Whilst people were blitzing away and falling into deep chess analysis, a lone figure was

'It's OK, you're a legend. Things will improve,' they told him.'

seen wandering, in what seemed like some distress, just outside of the 'fun zone'.

In the majority of chess events, this figure would have been left there to wallow in his own torment, but in Gibraltar social niceties are different.

A small group of rallying troops stopped their respective chess clocks and looked up from the 64 squares, and in unison approached the suffering soul. 'Hey, what's up?', they enquired. Vassily Ivanchuk was shuffling backwards and forwards, clearly in mental pain after his loss to Gupta. 'This is a terrible game; I have nothing to play for. I am giving up', he replies. Worried glances were shared amongst the group of well-wishers. 'It's OK, you're a legend. Things will improve', they told him. 'No, I will withdraw and give up, now I need some drink. Vodka,' he opined. It was now clear that the group had to spur themselves into some positive action! This lone wolf was injured, and needed patching up.

What happened next was simply magical! Upon entering the pack, this anguished soul was at first still lost in that pain that only chess players feel; but after sensibly opting for a jug of tea he was placed in front of a chess board and his whole aura changed. First up to challenge him was a keen amateur player, rated only around a modest Elo of 1800. After a number of games a curled lip, the slightest of smiles. The challengers got tougher, but the smile grew larger still.

The legendary GM left after some time, basking in a radically altered mood. Clearly changed for the better by how the evening had treated him, he went on to win a great game the next day, and was spotted blitzing away in the bar area on a nightly basis for the rest of the tournament.

Other Highlights

One thing that particularly impressed me was the sheer calculating ability that Hikaru Nakamura possesses. This next game, graciously annotated by his opponent Nils Grandelius, shows just what the 'H-Bomb's' opponents are up against.' 21.♕a1!! must be a strong contender for the non-existent 'Defensive move of the tournament' award.

NOTES BY
Nils Grandelius

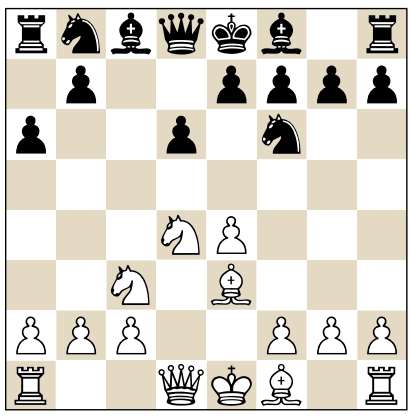
Hikaru Nakamura
Nils Grandelius
Gibraltar 2018 (4)
Sicilian Defence,
Scheveningen Variation

I had started with 3 out of 3, and now I was Black against Hikaru Nakamura on Board 1 – exactly the same situation as in Gibraltar 2015!

1.e4!?

A surprise already on move 1! In our previous game, Hikaru opened 1.c4 and beat me convincingly. Since he had been up all night playing ProChessLeague, I didn't expect a sharp theoretical battle. The fact that I've played too many dubious Sicilians lately probably affected his choice...

1...c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3



Another minor surprise. Lately, 6.♗g5 has been very fashionable against the Najdorf at the highest level. Again my

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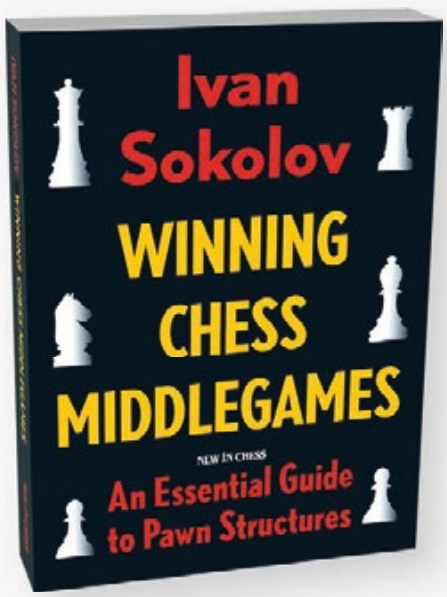

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opponent's choice was more likely based on my repertoire than on the objective merits of the move.

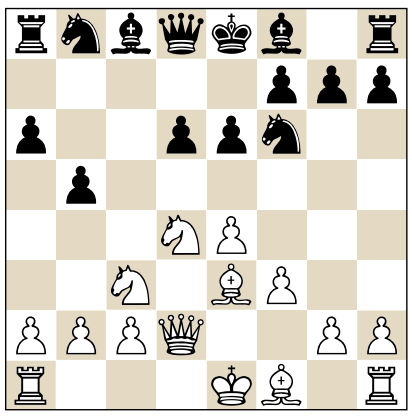
6...e6!?

6...e5 and 6...♘g4 are considered slightly more solid by the current theory, but I have always greatly enjoyed playing the Scheveningen structure with ...d6 and ...e6.

7.f3

7.g4 has gone out of fashion because of the many difficult-to-avoid forced draws.

7...b5 8.♕d2



8...b4

8...♘bd7 9.g4 h6 10.0-0-0 b4 is the other big line in which White is provoked to play g4, but on the other hand he has the possibility 11.♘ce2 instead, which leads to one of the most complicated lines in the entire Najdorf.

9.♘a4

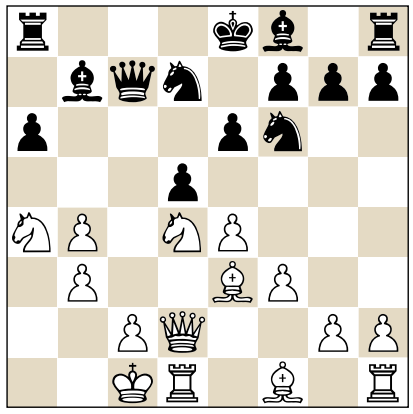
Here 9.♘ce2 is not as effective, because after 9...e5 10.♘f5 ♗xf5 White would really like to recapture with the g-pawn.

However, an interesting alternative exists in 9.♘d1!?, which looks a bit odd, but the knight is decent on f2 instead of being a target on a4, or blocking the light-squared bishop on f1. Now 9...♗e7 10.g4 h6 11.♖g1 g5 led to a very complicated fight in Dominguez-Grandelius, Baku 2016.

9...♘bd7 10.0-0-0

10.g4 is illogical, because White is trying to avoid the position arising after 10...h6 11.0-0-0 ♘e5 from every move order

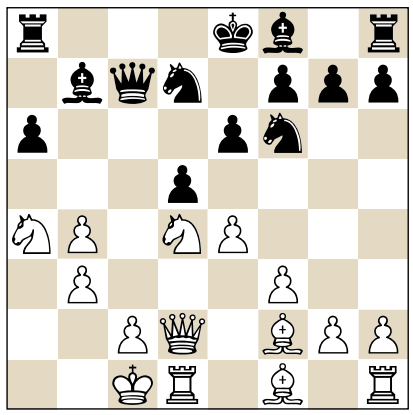
10...♕a5 11.b3 ♗b7 12.a3 ♕c7 13.axb4 d5



14.♗f2!?

This was actually played two days earlier in a game Bok-Gordievsky from the Tata Steel Challengers, a game that had unfortunately escaped my attention.

14.b5 e5 is the start of a very complicated line as played, for example, between Caruana and Topalov in 2014 in Norway Chess (½-½, 66).



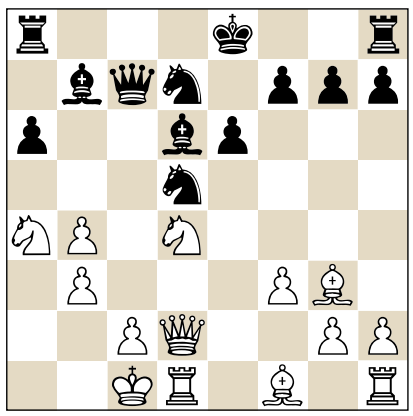
14...♗d6? After a long think I decided to sacrifice a pawn and castle. In a position with opposite castling the pawn shouldn't matter much. Unfortunately, it runs into some very concrete problems.

Of course, 14...dxe4 was the first move that crossed my mind, but without any concrete preparation it seemed incredibly dangerous to play this way. After 15.♗g3 e5 16.♗c4 g6! the position is very complicated and needs further analysis, but I do believe Black will hold. Playing it over the board against a well-prepared opponent is a completely different story, though.

14...e5 was played by Gordievsky, but here the computer's suggestion of 15.exd5 exd4 16.♖e1+ ♔d8 17.♗xd4 ♘xd5 18.♗c4 ♗xb4 19.c3 ♗a3+

20.♔b1 looks very dangerous for Black.

15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♗g3



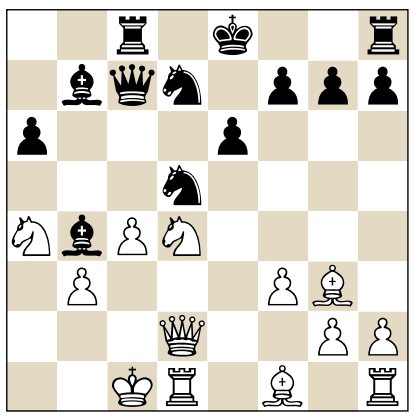
16...♖c8!? 16...0-0 17.c4 ♘5f6 18.♘xe6 doesn't work at all.

And 16...♗xg3 17.hxg3 ♕xg3 wins back the pawn, but here White keeps all his trumps. After something like 18.c4 ♘5f6 19.♗d3 Black won't survive for long. Notice how the advanced queenside pawns do a great job of restricting my pieces.

17.c4!

17.♗c4 was in fact a strong alternative, the point being that 17...♗xb4 18.♕xb4 ♘xb4 19.♗xc7 ♖xc7 20.♖he1 wins for White due to a sacrifice on e6 next.

17...♗xb4



18.♕g5! After a very long think Hikaru decides to go for the most principled and strongest option.

18.♗xc7 ♗xd2+ 19.♔xd2 ♘xc7 is a bit better for White, but nothing too serious.

18...♕a5 19.♕xg7 ♖f8

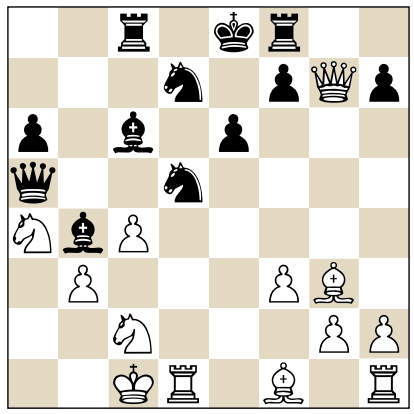
19...♗a3+ is nicely refuted by 20.♔b1 ♘c3+ 21.♔c2 ♘xd1 22.♕xh8+ ♔e7 23.♕xc8! ♗xc8 24.♘c6+, and White wins.

SOPHIE TRIAY

Scenes from a lively post-mortem. Hikaru Nakamura and Nils Grandelius had a lot to discuss after their sharp battle.

20.♘c2 ♗c6

While calculating this, I thought I had very decent counterplay here, since almost all my pieces are attacking and White is a bit underdeveloped. The next move really shows Hikaru's class, especially because it is clear he had seen it many moves ago.



21.♕a1!! The only move, but the winning one! 21.cxd5? ♗xa4 22.dxe6 would allow 22...♖xc2+! 23.♔xc2 ♗xb3+! 24.♔xb3 ♘c5+, with a draw by perpetual, after for example 25.♔c4 ♕b5+ 26.♔d5 ♕b7+ 27.♔c4 ♕b5+ 28.♔d5.

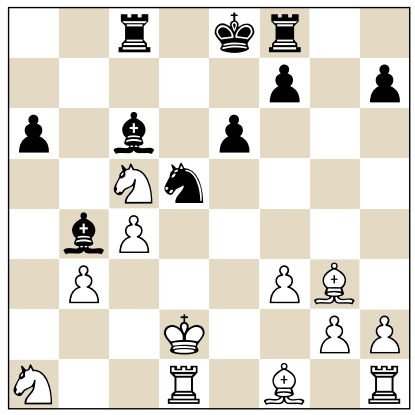
21...♘c5 A desperate try, which is confidently refuted by Hikaru.

21...♗xa4 22.♕xa4 ♕xa4 23.bxa4 ♘c3 doesn't work, because the bishop is hanging on b4.

And 21...♘e3 is an inspired try, but after 22.♘xe3 ♘c5 23.♕a2 ♘xb3+ 24.♕xb3 ♗xa4 25.♕a2 ♗xd1 26.♕xa5 ♗xa5 27.♘xd1 Black simply doesn't have enough pieces left.

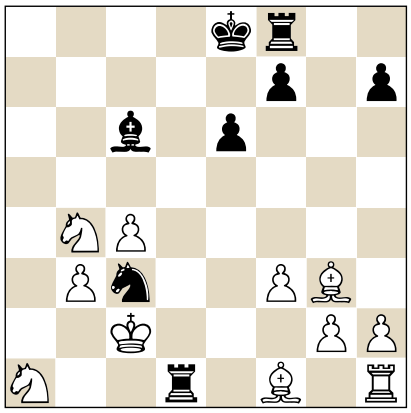
Perhaps the best try was 21...♘7b6, but 22.♘xb6 ♕xa1+ 23.♘xa1 ♘xb6 24.♘c2 is a very clear pawn up for White.

22.♘xc5 ♕xa1+ 23.♘xa1 ♗a3+ 24.♔d2 ♗b4+



25.♔d3 The only move, but also an easy one. **25...♘c3 26.♘xa6!** The easiest.

26...♖d8+ 27.♔c2 ♖xd1 28.♘xb4



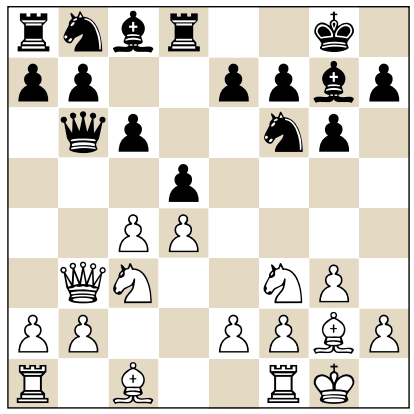
The rest doesn't require any comment.
28...♖xa1 29.♔xc3 ♔d7 30.♘c2 ♖b1 31.♘e1 ♖a8 32.♗d3 ♖c1+ 33.♔d2 ♖aa1 34.♗e5 ♖d1+ 35.♔e2 ♖ac1 36.♗b2
Black resigned.

Both David Howell and Richard Rapport had great tournaments; in their individual clash Richard came out on top.

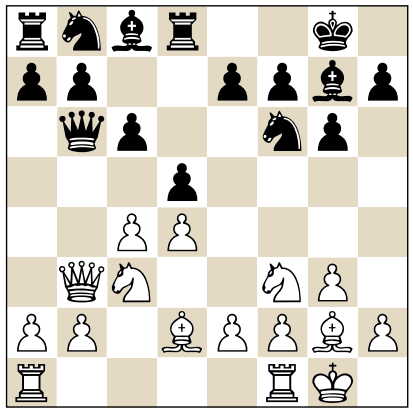
NOTES BY
Richard Rapport

Richard Rapport
David Howell
Gibraltar 2018 (8)
Neo-Grünfeld Defence

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 c6 5.♘c3 d5 6.♕b3 0-0 7.♗g2 ♕b6 8.0-0 ♖d8



9.♗d2!?
A relatively new, but more important, a rare move! I discovered it while preparing for the second game of my mini-match vs. Ding Liren (who had used the move on an earlier occasion) at the World Cup in Tbilisi (which eventually happened to be my last game there). I generally thought, while preparing for this game, that following Ding's approach cannot be such a bad idea.
9.♖d1 has often been played recently. And many top games have seen 9.♘a4 ♕xb3 10.axb3 ♘a6, which usually leads to very similar endgames to the one that occurred in this game.



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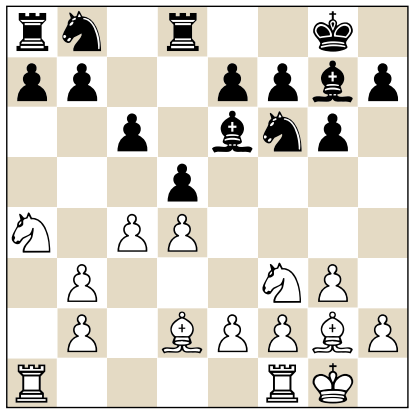
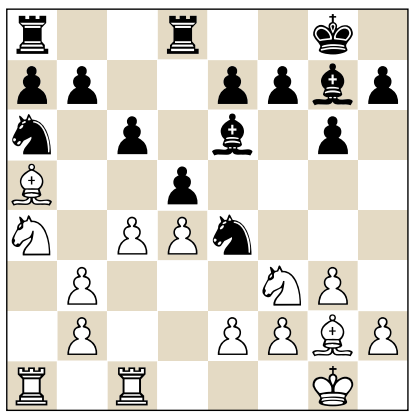
9...♗e6
Obviously, White should wonder what happens if Black takes the pawn: 9...dxc4!? 10.♕xc4 ♕xb2 11.e4. While preparing, I wasn't really convinced by White's compensation. I guess I am going to have to wait till someone tries this obviously brave but thematic approach as Black.
9...♗f5 has been played as well, when 10.♕a3!? would be something funny to try, aiming at the e7-pawn and the a5-square. Now, after 10...dxc4 11.e4, 11...♘xe4? would be a blunder because of 12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.♗a5, and Black loses the rook.
10.♘a4 ♕xb3 11.axb3



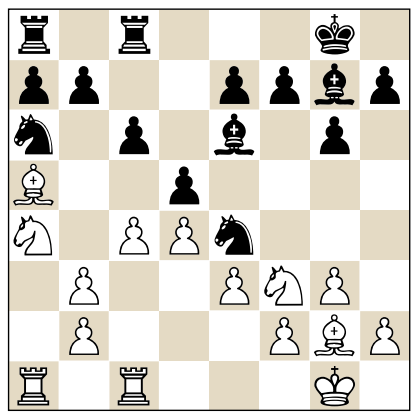
11...♘a6 11...♘bd7!? was also an option. After all, the knight did get into some trouble on a6 later on(!): 12.♖fc1 ♘e4 (or 12...♗f5 13.e3 etc, with a positional struggle. I think the position is still completely balanced) 13.♗a5 b6 14.♗e1 ♖ac8, which led to an equal position in Giri-So, Wijk aan Zee 2017.
12.♖fc1 ♘e4 This was the first new move. I must admit that during the game I was sort of surprised that such a logical move hadn't been tried before. I decided just to continue carrying out Ding's concept.
After 12...♘e8 13.e3 h6 14.♗a5 ♖dc8 15.♘d2 there was already some pressure on Black, since the knight on a6 got sort of stuck: 15...♘ec7 16.♗f1! ♗d7 17.♗xc7! ♖xc7 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♗xa6 ♖xc1+ 20.♖xc1 bxa6 21.♖c7, with a clear white advantage in Ding Liren-Haddouche, Tbilisi World Cup 2017 (1-0, 49).
13.♗a5

SOPHIE TRIAY

Richard Rapport had a great tournament and was one of the seven players who tied for first. In the playoffs the Hungarian was eliminated by Levon Aronian.



13...♖dc8 In such a position, 13...b6 is always an option: 14.♗e1 c5! (things are speeding up as Black confronts White's centre) 15.♘c3 (15.e3 is also possible, just to hold things together in the centre. But 15.cxd5 releases the tension too early: 15...♗xd5 16.♘c3 ♘xc3 17.bxc3 ♘c7, and this looks kind of 'Grünfeldish' with counterplay for Black) 15...♘c7, and now:
A) 16.e3, and I find the position simply more comfortable for White.
B) 16.cxd5 ♘xc3! (16...♗xd5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 would be what White hopes for: some small edge with risk-free play) 17.bxc3 ♗xd5, with equality.
14.e3 White's play seems 'easy', as he focuses on the a6-knight, while Black has to answer several small questions for a while.



14...g5!? There is generally not much going on in the position. Black decides to play something a little more aggressive, with an actual idea, rather than just wait.
14...♗f5 would have been a logical idea, to prepare the ...e7-e5 advance, when 15.♗f1 gives White an edge.
It's not the right moment for 14...c5? 15.cxd5 ♗xd5 16.♘g5, with a clear advantage for White.
15.♘d2
Here, 15.♗f1!? after all; I think it would just transpose to the game: 15...g4 16.♘d2 (after 16.♘h4?! c5 Black can get counterplay against the centre) 16...♘xd2 17.♗xd2, and see the game.
15...♘xd2 16.♗xd2 g4
By now my opponent had spent plenty

Gibraltar 2018

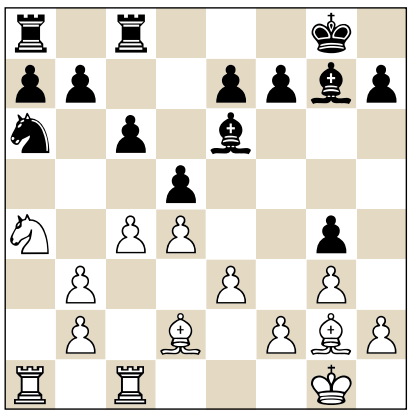
					TPR
1	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2781	7½	2822
2	Richard Rapport	HUN	2700	7½	2763
3	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2793	7½	2759
4	Levon Aronian	ARM	2797	7½	2746
5	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2732	7½	2731
	Michael Adams	ENG	2709	7½	2731
7	Le Quang Liem	VIE	2737	7½	2713
8	David Howell	ENG	2682	7	2760
9	Abhijeet Gupta	IND	2610	7	2732
10	Das Debashis	IND	2501	7	2728
11	Jan-Krzysztof Duda	POL	2724	7	2713
	Grigoriy Oparin	RUS	2607	7	2713
13	Wang Hao	CHN	2711	7	2710
14	Daniele Vocaturo	ITA	2609	7	2679
15	Boris Gelfand	ISR	2697	7	2673
16	S.P. Sethuraman	IND	2646	7	2672
17	Emil Sutovsky	ISR	2673	7	2668
18	Daniil Dubov	RUS	2694	7	2658
19	Lance Henderson	ESP	2429	7	2642
20	Ori Kobo	ISR	2477	7	2638
21	Ivan Cheparinov	BUL	2699	7	2634
22	Alexander Motylev	RUS	2673	7	2633
	S.L. Narayanan	IND	2573	7	2633
24	Vladimir Epishin	RUS	2536	7	2595
25	Falko Bindrich	GER	2605	7	2594
26	Mikhail Antipov	RUS	2588	6½	2715
27	Benjamin Gledura	HUN	2612	6½	2711
28	Nils Grandelius	SWE	2647	6½	2686
29	Victor Mikhalevski	ISR	2538	6½	2674
30	Pia Cramling	SWE	2449	6½	2659
31	Andrey Esipenko	RUS	2571	6½	2643
32	Bogdan Daniel-Deac	ROU	2549	6½	2639
33	M.R. Venkatesh	IND	2445	6½	2635
34	David Navara	CZE	2749	6½	2633
35	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2726	6½	2619
36	Lalith Babu M.R.	IND	2542	6½	2600
37	Pavel Tregubov	RUS	2575	6½	2599
38	Ivan Saric	CRO	2664	6½	2596
39	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2745	6½	2591
40	Varuzhan Akobian	USA	2647	6½	2583
41	Rasmus Svane	GER	2595	6½	2581
42	S. Dhopade Swapnil	IND	2533	6½	2580
43	Kateryna Lagno	RUS	2556	6½	2554
44	Prasanna Raghuram Rao	IND	2458	6½	2549
45	G.N. Gopal	IND	2593	6½	2536
46	Nihal Sarin	IND	2524	6½	2523
47	Dmitrij Kollars	GER	2505	6½	2514
48	Gregory Kaidanov	USA	2548	6½	2498

Aronian defeated Vachier-Lagrave

2½-1½ in the playoff final

275 players, 10 rounds

of time, and since the position is still unpleasant to defend for Black, some serious zeitnot could be expected.



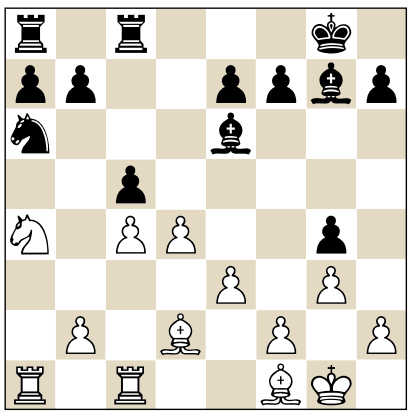
17.♗f1

17.b4!? was another interesting option: 17...dxc4, when the following line is kind of forced: 18.b5 cxb5 19.♗xb7 bxa4 20.♗xa6 ♖cb8 21.♗c3. White is clearly better, but the structure made me think that the best I could get is to take his queenside pawns for my b2-pawn, which would still leave a technically difficult position. Therefore, to keep the game lively, I opted for 17.♗f1.

17...dxc4

17...♗f5!? was another try to find some compensation on the light squares for the pawn: 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 20.♗xa6 bxa6 21.♘c5 e5 22.♗c3 ♗f8. Here White is clearly better and he is going to capture on a6 soon. Still, Black could have considered this instead of 17...dxc4, since the bishop pair is always supposed to give some chances of survival.

18.bxc4 c5



19.♗g2!

19.d5 would also have been comfortable, but I wanted to get an improved version.

19...♖ab8 20.d5 By 'forcing' the rook to b8, White makes it even more difficult for Black to bring the a6-knight back into the game.

20...♗d7 21.♗c3!?

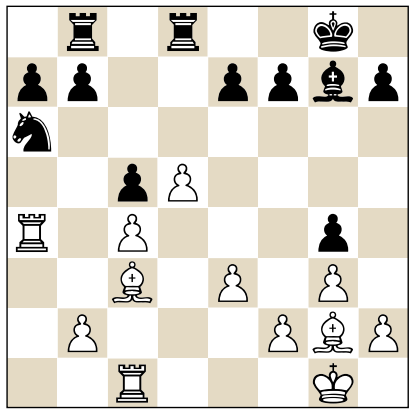
I had many other tempting options, such as 21.♘c3!?.

But 21.e4?! would be a mistake: 21...♖a8! – there is no d6 anymore.

21...♗xa4

After 21...♗xc3 22.♘xc3! it's difficult to suggest any plan for Black, as 22...♖a8? is always met by 23.d6!, and it's over.

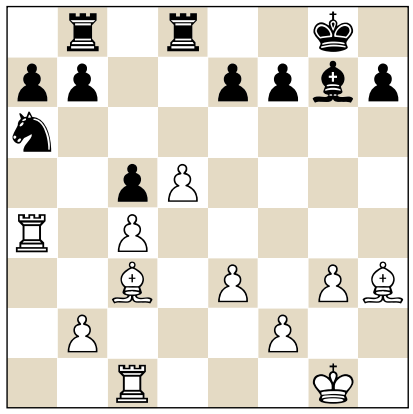
22.♖xa4 ♖d8



23.h3!? My plan was to get my centre rolling (of course I had no idea that it would work that well), and as the g4-pawn was doing a great job holding back this invasion, I decided to exchange it.

23...gxh3 23...h5 24.hxg4 hxg4 25.♗e4 looks terrible for Black, as g4 is very weak now.

24.♗xh3

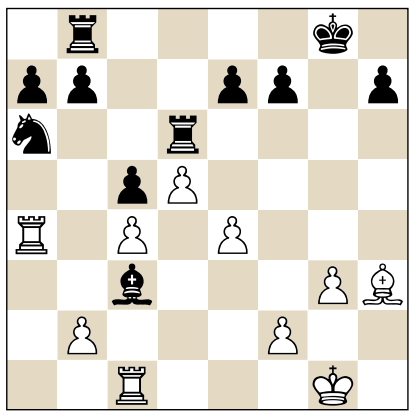


24...♖d6!

A creative defensive idea, even though the machine gives a stable

+1 edge for White. But in a practical game there are some hopes to survive with a possible blockade.

25.e4 ♗xc3



26.♖xc3

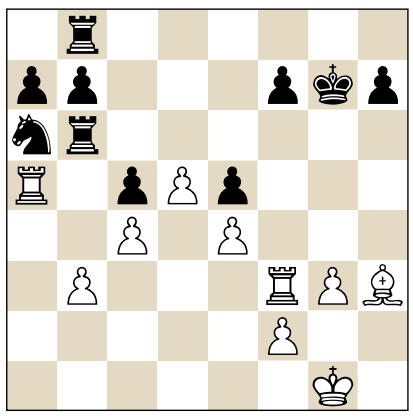
26.bxc3!? is the engine's choice: 26...e5 27.f4 ♖e8 28.♗f5 ♖e7, and somehow it feels like Black's blockade might hold, since at some point the knight can reach d6. But after checking the position a little more, I think this is highly unlikely.

26...♖b6 After 26...e5, 27.♖b3! ♖b6 28.♖b5 would be fatal, as Black cannot hold the centre together.

27.b3 e5 28.♖f3 Also strong was 28.dxe6!? fxe6 29.♖d3.

28...♔g7 29.♖a5! Just a little improvement and preparing the manoeuvre used in the game.

After 29.♗d7 ♖d8 30.♗b5 ♘c7 White wouldn't have made such a lot of progress.



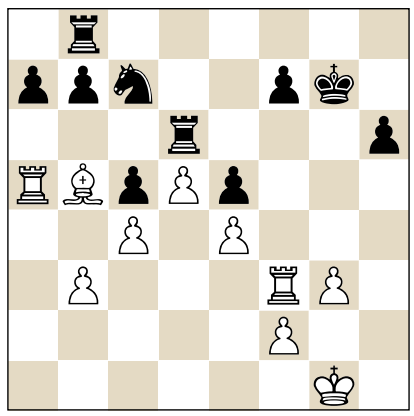
29...h6?!

I think this is just a blunder.

Better was 29...♖d8 30.♖f5!? f6 (30...♖xb3 31.♖xe5 seems very nice for White) 31.♖f3, when after provoking the f6 weakening, I might just play ♗f5, march my king to c3 and target the h7-pawn.

30.♗d7 ♖d6 31.♗b5 ♘c7

In case of 31...♘b4 32.♗a4!, I would try to limit Black's counterplay as much as possible: 32...♘c2 33.♖xc5.



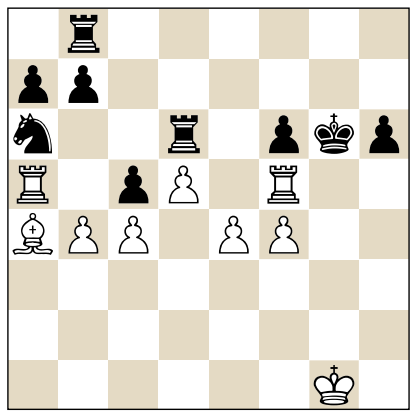
32.♗a4! Grabbing the pawn with 32.♖xa7 already offered great winning chances, but I felt it was more practical to keep the tension.

32...♘a6 33.♖f5 f6 34.f4 Now Black's original defence is broken; he has to give up the e5-square.

34...exf4 35.gxf4 ♔g6

The only move. Now Black has seemingly accomplished another kind of defence to prevent my e5-push.

36.b4!



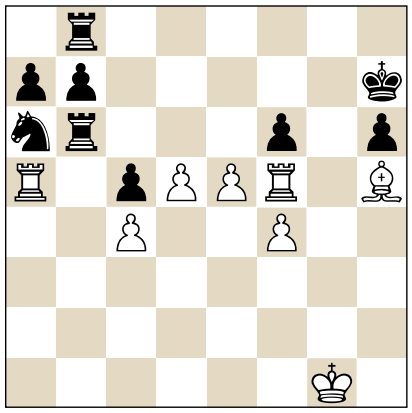
36...♘xb4 After 36...cxb4 37.c5 ♖dd8 38.♔f2 Black is lost.

37.♗d1!

The main idea behind my whole plan of ♗a4-♖f5-f4-b4. With a little twist the bishop appears on the other side, removing the last defender from preventing the e5 breakthrough, which decides the game as well.

37...♘a6 Or 37...♔g7 38.♖xc5 ♘a6 39.♖b5, and next is e5.

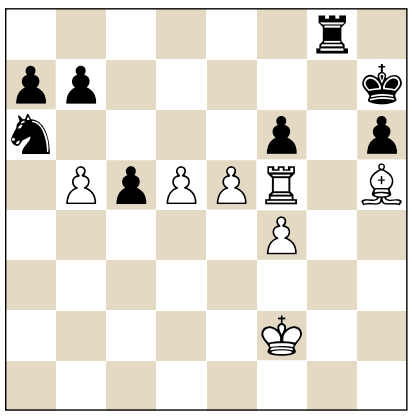
38.♗h5+ ♔h7 39.e5 ♖b6



40.♖b5!?

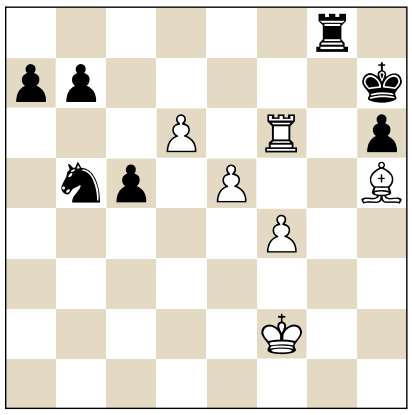
This seemed like the human way. Stronger, but also scarier to play, was 40.e6 ♖g8+ 41.♔f2 ♖b2+ 42.♔f3 ♖b3+ 43.♔e4 ♖g1 44.♖xf6, and with the king hiding on f5 this would be winning.

40...♖g8+ 41.♔f2 ♖xb5 42.cxb5



42...♘c7 Or 42...♘b4 43.e6 c4 44.e7 c3 when 45.♖xf6 just wins – 45...c2 46.♖f7+ ♔h8 47.♖f8.

43.d6 ♘xb5 44.♖xf6



From here on in, there is not much to analyse. White is totally winning, since it's only a matter of time before the pawns are going to start marching.

44...♖d8 45.♖f7+ ♔g8 46.♖xb7 a6 47.♖b6 c4 48.♖xa6 c3 49.♖c6

Black resigned. ■

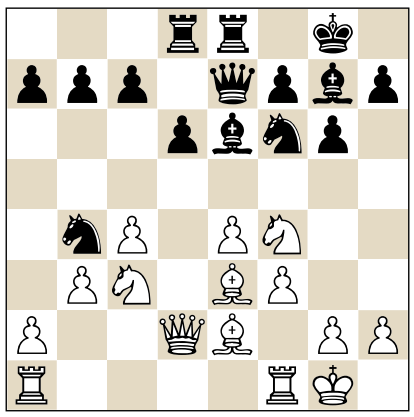
Chess Pattern Recognition

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

Break move impossible

Blowing up one's opponent's pawn structure where he least expects it – on an 'inaccessible, doubly protected' square – remains sensationally pleasing to the eye.

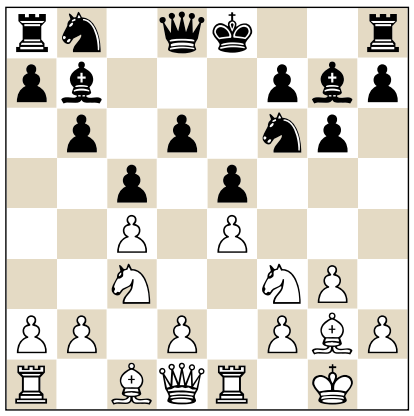
Many break moves are hard to spot, because they are 'illogical', but once you see them, they make a lot of sense. Mostly, there is an immediate tactical justification. Let's start with one of those before we proceed to the juicier stuff.



Osipov-Konstantinopolsky
Kiev 1938
position after 14.0-0?

14...d5! 'One of the first instances where the thematic break ...d6-d5 is executed against the Maroczy structure. As a result, this idea became very popular in various set-ups of the King's Indian' – Konstantinopolsky. Here the vulnerability of White's a1-rook and e3-bishop provide ample tactical justification for the typical central break, which indeed you will probably have witnessed in many a later game. **15.cxd5 ♗xd5 16.♘cxd5?** 16.♕c1 is more prudent, although Black is on top after 16...♗xe4 17.fxe4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♕xe4. **16...♘fxd5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♗g5 ♘c3** Now Black is winning. **19.♗d3 ♖xd3 20.♕xd3 ♕xg5 21.♖ac1 ♖d8 22.♕c4 ♖d2 23.g3 ♘e2+** 0-1.

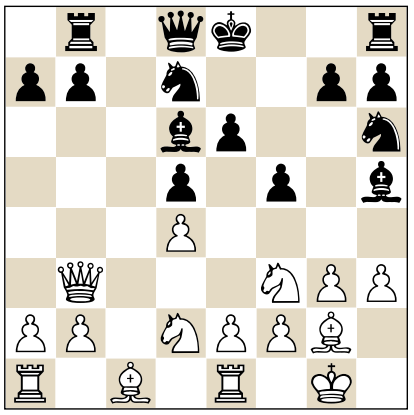
Other openings feature their own 'impossible breaks'. Let's start from the following theoretical position after 8... e5, when Black has just prevented d2-d4.



Romanishin-M.Gurevich
Moscow 1987
position after 8...e5

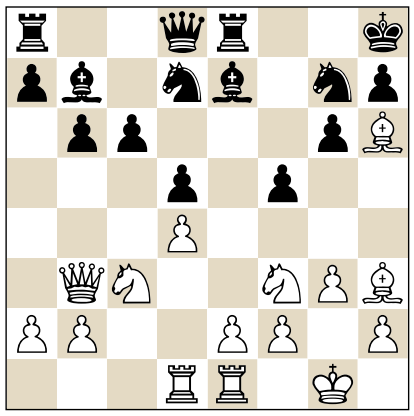
9.d4! Regardless! It shouldn't be too hard to discover that if Black takes the pawn, you can recapture with the knight. **9...♘c6!** 9...cxd4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.e5, and the diagonal of the g2-bishop opens up, while Black's king, still held up on its initial square, finds itself in the line of fire of the white rook on e1. The break typically allows the pieces to become active. Or, to put it somewhat differently, as a spectator at the Tilburg tournament of 1980 was quoted in the tournament book after witnessing the moves 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 c5 3.♗g2 ♘c6 4.0-0 e5 5.c4 d5 6.♕a4 ♗d6 7.♘g5 ♗d7 8.cxd5 ♘b4 9.♕d1 ♘fxd5 10.d4 (Portisch-Kavalek): 'When such moves are possible, the smell of corpses starts filling the room.' **10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♘d5 h6 12.b4!?** Continuing the search for quick activity. Objectively, Black might not be worse, but Romanishin eventually prevailed (1-0, 40).

Rather similar is the following game, with more fireworks, in which a 22-year-old Vladimir Kramnik demolishes his experienced opponent in a mere 18 moves. Which square is under firm black control in the Stonewall did you say?



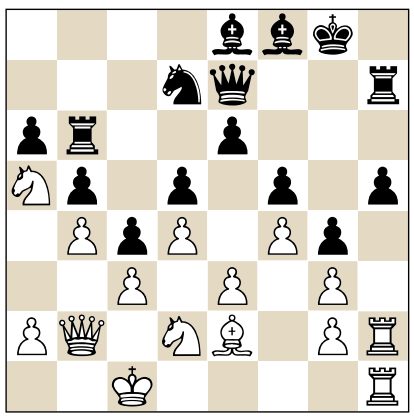
Kramnik-Beliavsky
Belgrade 1995
position after 11...♗h5

12.e4!! There you are! With his previous move, 11.h3, White had initiated this concept. Again the black king is lingering in the centre. Without doubt Kramnik had been inspired by... his own rapid game against Vyzmanavin a year earlier, when in this position:



he went 17.e4 fxe4 18.♘xe4, when 18...dxe4 can be met with 19.♘e5 ♘xe5 20.dxe5 ♕c7 21.♕f7 ♘h5 22.♖d7, with a horrible position for Black. **12...fxe4 13.♘g5 ♗f7 14.♘dxe4! dxe4 15.♘xe6 ♗xe6** Moves like 15...♕f6 don't make life prettier for Black after 16.♖xe4. **16.♕xe6+ ♕e7 17.♖xe4 ♔d8** Or 17...♕xe6 18.♖xe6+ ♗e7 19.♗xh6. **18.♕d5** And Beliavsky had seen enough. For example, 18...♕f8 19.♗g5+ ♘f6 20.♖ae1 is hopeless.

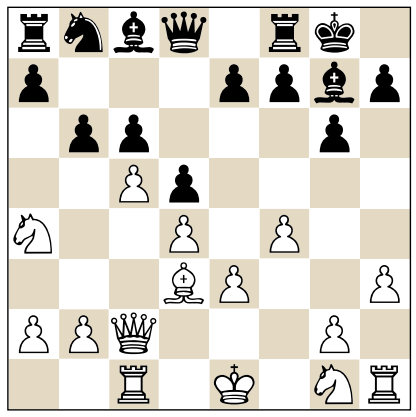
Here is yet another impossible break by Kramnik, albeit in a very different position.



Ipatov-Kramnik
Antalya 2013
position after 29.♔c1

29...e5! 30.dxe5 ♘xe5 31.fxe5 ♕xe5 Again a piece sac! Now the white pieces that had been hiding in their clumsy positions behind the closed eight-strong pawn formation suddenly have to get to work. Too late for that, though, or as Anish Giri put it in New In Chess 2014/1: 'It feels as if it's Black who is a piece up in the coming open struggle.' Ipatov did not really stand a chance: **32.♘f1 ♗g7 33.a3 ♕xc3+ 34.♕xc3 ♗xc3 35.♗d1 ♖e6 36.♗c2 ♗g6 37.♘d2 ♖xe3 38.♖d1 ♗f6 39.♖hh1 d4 40.♖de1 ♖he7 41.♖xe3 ♖xe3** 0-1.

In the next game, Magnus Carlsen demonstrates another element in the immediate follow-up of the break.

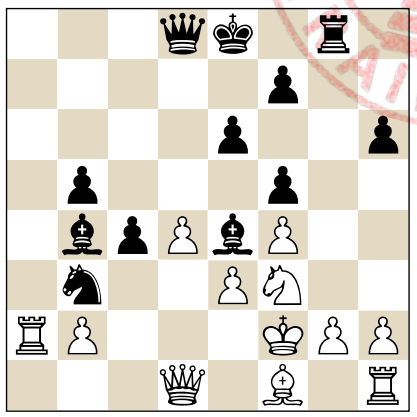


Wang Yue-Carlsen
Nanjing 2009
position after 13.♘a4

13...e5! Right on! Remember that Black has just backtracked with ...♘xb8 and ...♗c8, and now he opens up the position with **14.dxe5 f6!** And rightly so! White's position is not ready for this – take, for instance, the weak dark squares on the kingside. The idea was not new by the way; Inarkiev-Ni Hua, Sochi 2008 is a similar example. **15.exf6 ♕xf6 16.♘f3 ♕e7!** Eyeing e3 and c5 – already White is in trouble. **17.♔f2 b5 18.♘c3 ♘a6 19.♕d2?! ♘xc5** And Carlsen had the much better position, but had to acquiesce to a draw when he missed a win later in the game (½-½, 58).

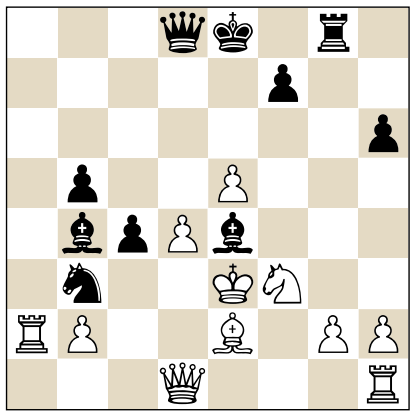
'Which square is under Black's firm control in the Stonewall did you say?'

It is hard to choose from the many other beautiful and surprising examples – here's a last one, in which Veselin Topalov wins an extremely imaginative game.



Van Wely-Topalov
Wijk aan Zee 2006
position after 20.♖a2

20...e5!! 21.fxe5 f4! This is the idea: the pawn on d4 comes under attack – White's pawn structure crumbles and his king comes under fire. **22.♗e2** 22.exf4 ♗xf3 23.gxf3 ♗d2 is curtains. **22...fxe3+ 23.♔xe3**



The position remains very difficult, and both sides might have improved during the next moves, but after **23...♕d5 24.g3 ♘xd4 25.♘xd4 ♗xh1 26.♗f3 ♕xe5+ 27.♔f2 ♗c5 28.♗xh1 ♗xd4+** White was a pawn and a position down, and duly lost (0-1, 43).
Jan Timman went as far as to call 20...e5 a very natural breaking move. Well, if you start studying some easier examples, like Tarrasch-Nimzowitsch, Nuremberg 1904, who knows, you might end up playing these impossible breaks with natural ease indeed!

And if you're in the mood for more, you may turn to Timman's column in this issue, where he shows a position from the game Le Quang Liem-Dubov from the recent Gibraltar Masters. A game that featured what many called 'the move of the tournament'. Any idea what it could be? ■

A book worthy of a World Championship match

Our book reviewer saves the best for last. First he deals with 'the more exotic arrivals on his doorstep' and then **MATTHEW SADLER** gets into raptures about a superb account of the match in New York with fascinating insights by former champ Vladimir Kramnik.

For this time, I've taken a break from opening books and focused on the more exotic recent arrivals on my doorstep! The first book is Sergey Kasparov's *Doubled Pawns – A Practical Guide* (Russell Enterprises). It feels like a series is taking shape as this is S. Kasparov's second book on positional themes for Russell Enterprises (his first book, *The Exchange Sacrifice – A Practical Guide* was reviewed in New In Chess 2016/8). This book is structured in a similar manner to the previous volume. S. Kasparov brings together 150 games in which doubled pawns have played a role, and then divides them up into 10 thematic chapters. Some of these are dedicated to specific doubled pawn structures – for example, 'Doubled Pawns after the capture ...g7xf6' – while other chapters are dedicated to specific openings, drawing heavily on S. Kasparov's personal experience in the Exchange Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6) and the Rossolimo Variation of the Sicilian (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5). The last chapter is a sort of catch-all in which a number of different/unrelated openings are dealt with.

In a way I feel I could repeat my review of S. Kasparov's previous book! When I saw the title, I thought: what a great idea for a book! As far as I can tell, this is the first book dedicated to this theme and I'm struggling to think of a book that has spent any time at all dealing with doubled pawns, the exception perhaps being a chapter in Jörg Hickl's recent book *The Power of Pawns*. S. Kasparov should also be praised for bringing together so much material together in one book. Many of the games he presents (from his own practice) are not in any databases I have seen, which guarantees the originality of the material.

It's tough being a pioneer and it's easy to criticise, but there were however some things that I was less happy with. I suppose the organisation of the material was the first point. Doubled pawns are a weakness, so in general you will only assume them with a specific goal in mind. I would expect a practical guide to be organised around the reasons for assuming or inflicting doubled pawns. Focusing on specific structures or openings made a little less sense for me: at the end, I'd seen a lot of positions with doubled pawns, but I wasn't sure why they had happened! The conclusions at the end of each chapter are also somewhat perfunctory. I felt that a lot more effort could have been made to draw some practically valuable conclusions from the material presented. I should note that the editing is a little rough with quite a few formatting errors, though not enough to put me off.

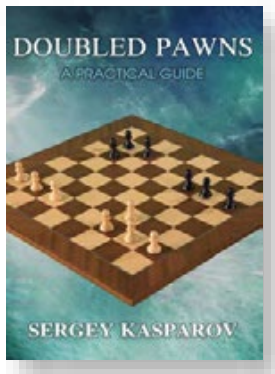
The most interesting moments in the book are when S. Kasparov openly discusses positions from his own practice that seem innocuous, but with which he has struggled greatly. The following game from the Caro-Kann is a good example:

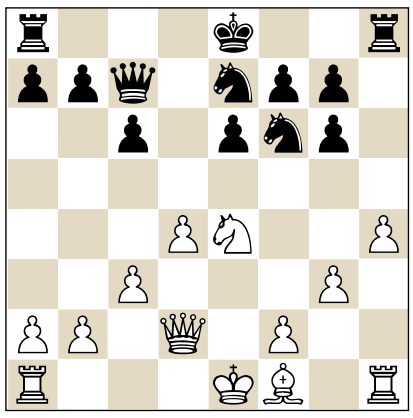
Michele Godena
Sergey Kasparov
Frascati 2006
Caro-Kann, Classical Variation

As the author explains, 'I faced this problem for the first time in a "strange" variation of the Caro-Kann Defence with 6.♘h3. Moreover, that was a round-robin tournament, so I was expecting this line. This is why the loss came especially as a shock. Does it mean that even when prepared in advance, Black is unable to equalize?! The Italian grandmaster acted almost ideally, taking advantage of my impulsiveness.'

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.♘h3 e6 7.♘f4 ♕c7 8.h4 ♗d6 9.♘xg6 hxg6 10.♘e4 ♗f4 11.g3 ♗xc1 12.♕xc1 ♘e7 13.♕d2 ♘d7 14.c3 ♘f6

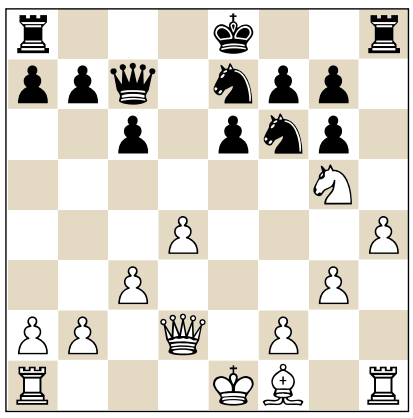
Doubled Pawns
by Sergey Kasparov
Russell Enterprises,
2018
★★★☆☆





'At first sight this appears to be full equality as Black does not have weaknesses. The pawns g6-f7-e6, b7-c6 might slow down the enemy bishop in future. However...'

15.♘g5



'From g5, the knight targets the f7 and e6-pawns. To protect them, the adversary will have to assign a rather more powerful piece than the knight.'

15...♘f5 16.♗g2 0-0-0 17.♕e2 ♖d7 18.0-0 ♘xg3

'A poor idea, but were there any worthy alternatives? One could suggest a trade, 18...♘h7, but who would agree to the exchange? After 19.♘f3, the white knight can choose between ♘f3-e5 and ♘f3-g5, in both cases making his opponent uncomfortable.'

19.fxg3 ♕xg3 20.♕f2 ♕xh4 21.♕xh4 ♖xh4 22.♘f3 ♖h5 23.♘e5 ♖c7 24.b4 ♔d8 25.a4 ♔e8 26.b5 c5 27.a5 cxd4 28.cxd4 ♘d5 29.♗xd5 exd5 30.♖fc1 ♖xc1+ 31.♖xc1 f6 32.♖c8+ ♔e7 33.♘c6+ ♔d7 34.♘xa7 ♖h4 35.b6 ♖xd4 36.♖c7+ ♔e6 37.♖xb7 ♖a4 38.♘c6 ♔d6 39.♖xg7 ♔xc6 40.b7 ♖a1+ 41.♔f2 ♖a2+ 1-0. 'An almost ideal performance by Godena.'

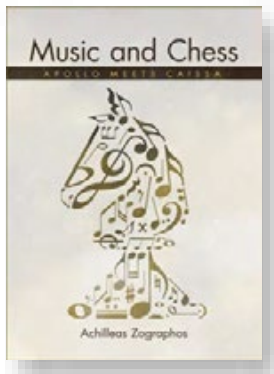
Although I feel that S. Kasparov let his pessimism during the game influence his play too much, it is interesting to hear when a strong player expresses discomfort about an innocent-looking position. It usually means there is more to it than meets the eye. It is no surprise that technical players like Rozentalis and Tiviakov have played it regularly (Tiviakov has beaten both S. Kasparov and his wife in this line!)

In conclusion, a great topic and some interesting material, but I feel much more could have been done with it to provide guidance to the reader.

■ ■ ■

The next book, *Music and Chess – Apollo meets Caissa* by Achilleas Zographos, is also unique, though in a quite different way. Russell Enterprises should be praised for bringing out such a beautifully produced work filled with (colour) illustrations which I imagine could only have a limited potential readership. Indeed, the author in his foreword pays tribute to his publisher's courage noting that a reader must '1. Be fond of Western classical music. 2.Play or at least have an interest in chess. 3. Be willing to risk purchasing a book on an apparently sophisticated subject.' As my brother is a concert pianist, I felt I was reasonably in the target range and I have to say I enjoyed it tremendously.

Music and Chess
by Achilleas
Zographos
Russell Enterprises,
2018
★★★☆☆



The author is a Greek music and chess teacher (a certified FIDE trainer) at the State Music School of Pallini since 1998. *Music and Chess* is essentially a 200-page rumination on the connections between chess and music. The chapter titles give some idea of the subjects discussed. 'Philidor and Rameau, a connecting theory' discusses the influence of the great French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Treatise on Harmony* (1722) on Philidor's *Analysis of the Game of Chess* (1749). 'Richard Réti and atonality' compares the 'hypermodern' chess ideas of Réti (whose elder brother was a composer) with the atonal music of Arnold Schönberg. There are chapters summarising interviews with Aronian and Kramnik as well as descriptions of weird and wonderful machines such as Ludwig – a program combining chess and music – and Guido van der Werve's chess-piano. All in all, a delightful read!

'As my brother is a concert pianist, I felt I was reasonably in the target range and I have to say I enjoyed it tremendously.'

■ ■ ■

The last book was a last gasp, just-in-time-through-my-letterbox affair: *Carlsen vs Karjakin* by Lev Alburt, Jon Crumiller and Vladimir Kramnik, published by CIRC, a match book on the World Championship Match of 2016. No offence to the other authors, but of course Kramnik's name is the

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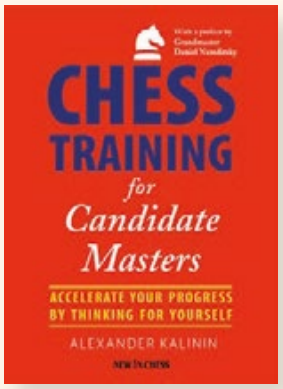

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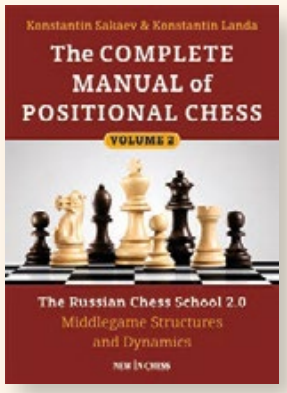

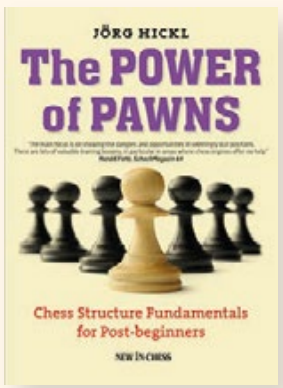

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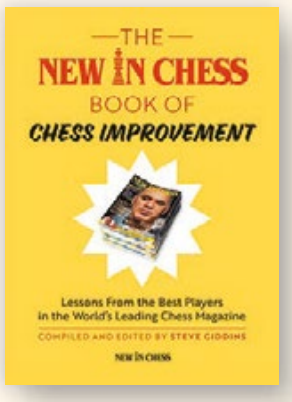

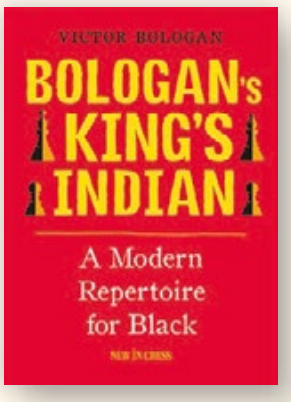

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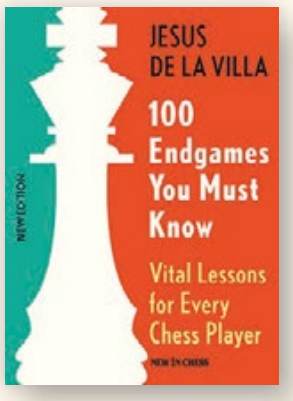

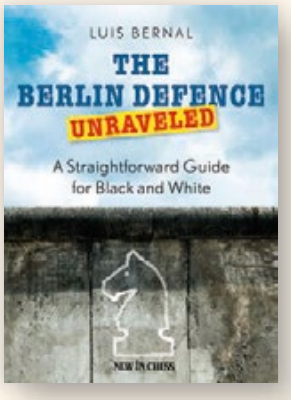

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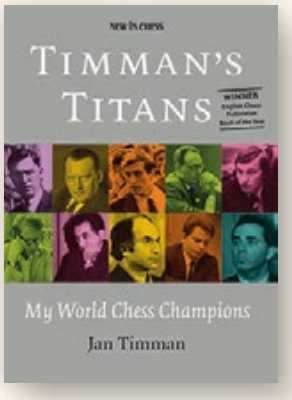

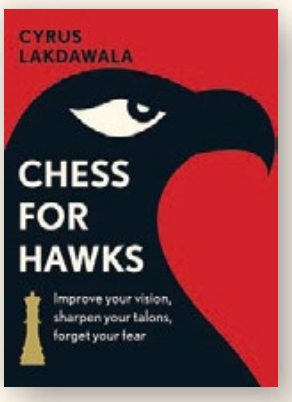

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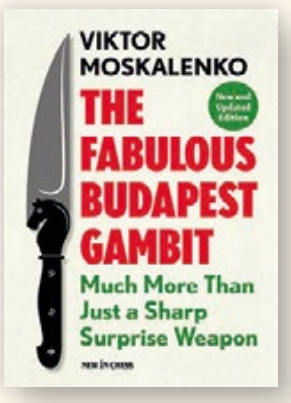
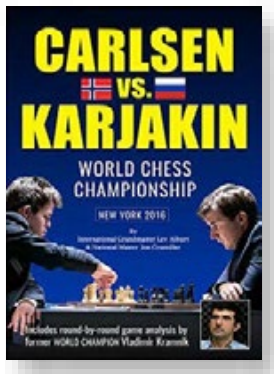


available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com

one that pops out right at you. And to my immense pleasure, he is all over the book! As Jon Crumiller explained to me in an email, Vladimir's thoughts on the match and on individual games were captured during lengthy Skype interviews. These interviews were then distilled into 'Vlad's Viewpoint' textboxes which supplement and enhance the 'standard' (and extremely readable) notes that the other authors provide. It's an unusual approach, but it works extremely well. As a former World Champion with the experience of many World Championship matches behind him, and still one of the world's best players, Kramnik is uniquely placed to offer insights both on the psychological aspect of the match and the chess itself, and he does so in his inimitable open and instructive manner. The interview at the start of the match where he reviews the match, contrasting it with his World Championship matches against Leko and Kasparov and discussing the opening tendencies in the modern game, is also fascinating.

Carlsen vs Karjakin
by Lev Alburt, Jon Crumiller & Vladimir Kramnik
CIRC, 2018
★★★★★



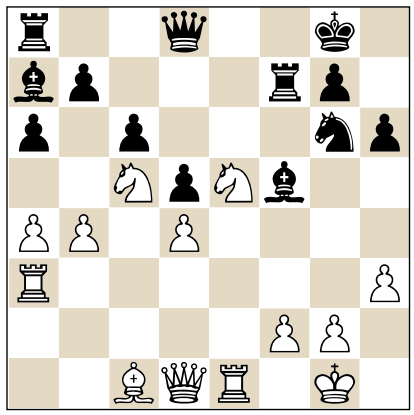
'Kramnik is uniquely placed to offer insights both on the psychological aspect of the match and the chess itself.'

Let me share a few of Kramnik's thoughts on Game 5, an Italian Game in which first Carlsen was pressing and then – after some inaccuracies – had to scramble around for a draw. After a little time with the book, I discovered that the best way to get a grip of a game was to start with Kramnik's summary at the end of the game with its instructive mix of chess insight and match psychology: 'Magnus managed to defend very nicely with 44.e6 and finally he was able to exchange everything and make a draw. In summary, it was not a bad game at all. Sergey probably made only one wrong move, 20...♗xc5, and otherwise he played a good game. He was defending, then at the right moment he made this very strong king manoeuvre to c8 and counterattacked with ...g5 and ...d4 at the right moments. His overall play was more confident. Magnus' play was interesting, but then at some point around move 30 he started to drift. When a player has already missed most of his chances, there arises a certain anger at yourself that you didn't play well. He certainly wanted to play for a win anyway, but he just didn't see how.

That's a very dangerous state of mind when you understand that there is no objective way, you don't see a plan, but you play for a win anyway. It's common for the opponent to get a counterattack in that situation. Of course Magnus saw ...d4 and ...♗d5, but maybe he thought his opponent wouldn't find a win, and he would be up a pawn. This is not the right way to play, a player shouldn't get emotional, but this happens to everyone from time to time. He made the same psychological mistake in his next White game and paid for it. After the game, Carlsen said that he was missing a move on his scoresheet, which is why he played 41.♔g2 so quickly. But it is not so much about the move 41.♔g2; his play starting with 38.g4 was leading up to the kind of problems which he finally experienced. He was trying to provoke Sergey into taking action, but that mindset is wrong when the position doesn't justify it. However, he did save it well in moves 44 to 50.'

You don't even need to have seen the game to be enthralled by such an explanation! Now let's zoom in to some specific moments in the game. To be honest, while watching it live, Game 5 had not made much of an impression on me: Magnus had got a little edge, not made much of it and then messed up a bit before holding a draw. I hadn't seen the game as particularly rich in chess content. Kramnik's comments, from which I select a few more, turned that view around completely.

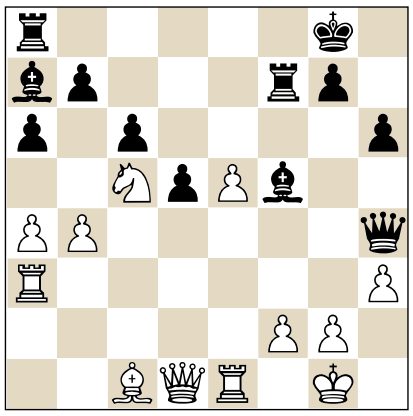
Magnus Carlsen
Sergey Karjakin
New York 2016, 5th match game
Giuoco Pianissimo
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.a4 d6 7.c3 a6 8.b4 ♗a7 9.♖e1 ♘e7 10.♘bd2 ♘g6 11.d4 c6 12.h3 exd4 13.cxd4 ♘xe4 14.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 15.♘xe4 d5 16.♘c5 h6 17.♖a3 ♗f5 18.♘e5



''Carlsen's 18.♘e5 looks logical and strategically good, but concretely it just doesn't seem to work after 19...♕h4 due to tactics. But I wouldn't criticise Magnus' play between moves 13 and 20. His play was logical, he was playing for a serious advantage, and if

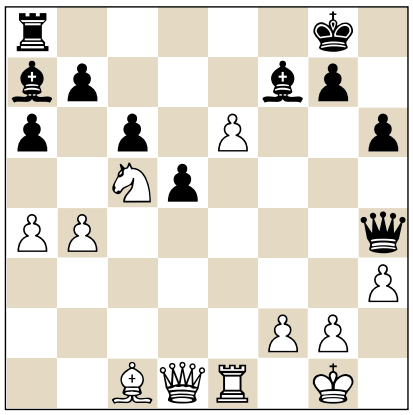
some small nuance would work in his favour, he would be much better. But it simply didn't happen that way.'

18...♘xe5 19.dxe5 ♕h4



20.♖f3

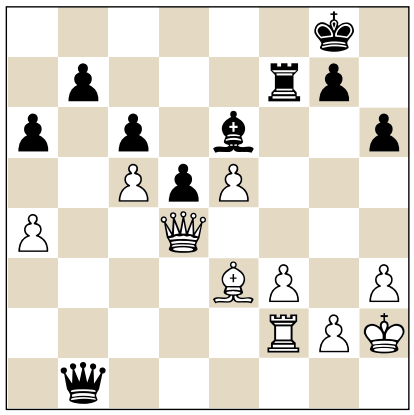
'Though 20.♖f3 is a good move, we now have the same story for Karjakin as in the previous game: ...♗xc5, which is very similar to ♗xc4 in the last game, although clearly not a mistake as ♗xc4 was. In this position the exchange is not all that bad. Karjakin must have thought that his position was starting to look scary, so with 20...♗xc5 he is at least escaping immediate danger. We all know now, as the computer shows, that 20...♗g6 gives Black a good game, but here I would not fault Karjakin because 20...♗g6 looks humanly dangerous: 21.♖xf7 ♗xf7 22.e6.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The e-pawn is running and the b7-pawn hangs somewhere along the line. But the computer shows that this line is fine for Black after 22...♗g6. But he played 20...♗xc5 21.bxc5 ♖e8, and although Black is worse, this position is much better than in Game 4 after ♗xc4. But the problem is that, again, this position is very much in Magnus' style, because White can press for a long time with no risk at all. One reason is the opposite-coloured bishops in the middlegame. But Magnus did not play it well – surprisingly because this type of position is exactly his cup of tea.'

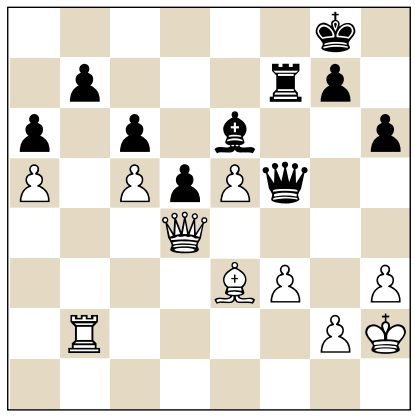
20...♗xc5 21.bxc5 ♖e8 22.♖f4 ♕e7 23.♕d4 ♖ef8 24.♖f3 ♗e4 25.♖xf7 ♕xf7 26.f3 ♗f5 27.♔h2 ♗e6 28.♖e2 ♕g6 29.♗e3 ♖f7 30.♖f2 ♕b1



'There is a very important moment after 30...♕b1. It's clear that White is preparing the g4-pawn push, and the natural way for Black to stop it is to play ...g5, but the problem is that with the king on g8 it's very dangerous. Black could simply get mated. So in general the position is very unpleasant for Black. But here on move 31.♖b2, I think that Magnus has lost much of his momentum already. Black has somehow managed to blockade the pawns, it's difficult to get in g4 and f4 since Black will have ...h5, so White needs to regroup his pieces and then start to slowly push the pawns. But it's easier said than done, and after having passed on the opportunity to play g4 and f4 on move 27. White will now need a long regrouping of his pieces in order to have another chance to do so.'

31.♖b2 ♕f5 32.a5

'Carlsen's 32.a5 was very surprising to me, and it went almost unnoticed in all commentaries, but I think it's a serious mistake. Sometimes White needs to enter with the bishop on that square so the occupying pawn closes out that chance completely. And it gave a chance to Sergey to move his king to the queenside, which is essential in the position. With the pawn on a4, Black could never really put his king on c8 because White can play ♕b4-b6 followed by bishop to a5, and Black can simply get mated. It would be almost impossible for Black to move his queen to the queenside, and if he cannot move his king, he cannot easily play ...g5 to defend the kingside, when White starts to push his pawns. And there was absolutely no threat to the a-pawn on a4. Probably Magnus missed the idea of the king march to c8. Still, I see only disadvantages to 32.a5, absolutely no advantages, so it's a very strange move that, in my opinion, kills all winning chances.'

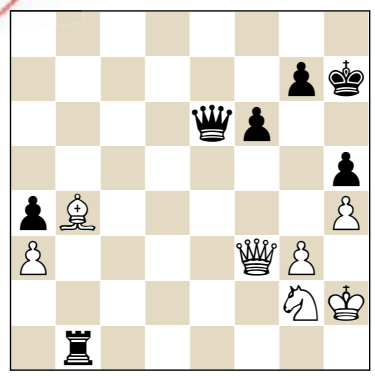


32...♔f8 33.♕c3 ♔e8 34.♖b4 g5 35.♖b2 ♔d8 36.♖f2 ♔c8 37.♕d4 ♕g6 38.g4 h5 39.♕d2 ♖g7 40.♔g3 ♖g8 41.♔g2 hxg4 42.hxg4 d4 43.♕xd4 ♗d5 44.e6 ♕xe6 45.♔g3 ♕e7 46.♖h2 ♕f7 47.f4 gxf4+ 48.♕xf4 ♕e7 49.♖h5 ♖f8 50.♖h7 ♖xf4 51.♖xe7 ♖e4

Draw.

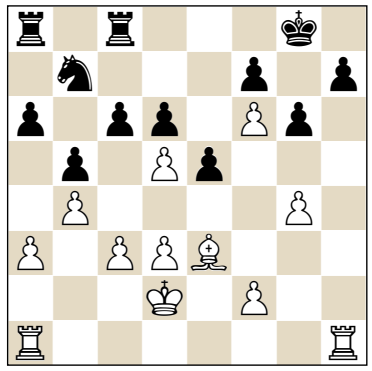
I'm focusing a lot on Kramnik, but it would be very unfair not to pay tribute to the efforts of the other authors, as this feels like a mini labour of love. There are many nice touches: each game is prefaced by 3 key positions and is completed by a computer evaluation chart of the course of the game. The book is also beautifully produced with many colour photos of the players and the venue. It's the kind of book worthy of a World Championship match, and it was an absolute pleasure to read! ■

MAXIMize your Tactics Solutions



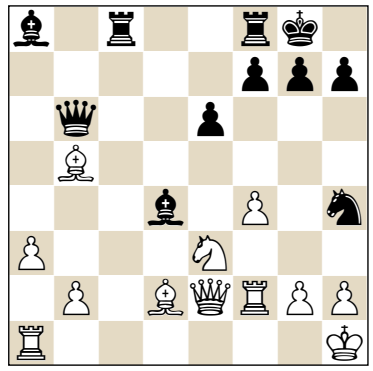
1. McShane-Anand
Riyadh rapid 2017

51...♕h3+! 52.♔xh3 ♖h1 mate. Remindful of how that other champion, Carlsen, won the world title in the last tiebreak game vs Karjakin!



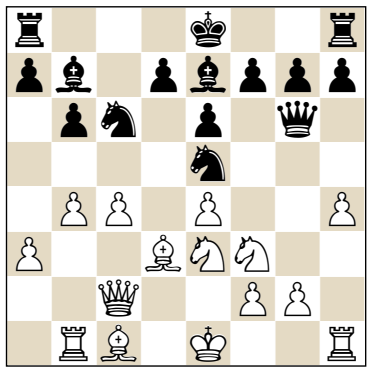
2. Tabatabaei-Rajdeep
Ahmedabad 2017

23.♖xh7! Making sure the king will not flee. **23...♔xh7 24.♖h1+ ♔g8 25.♗h6** Followed by 26.♗g7 and 27.♖h8 mate. Black resigned.



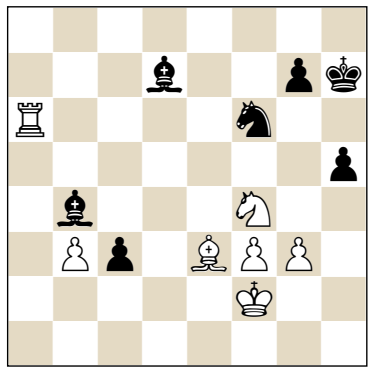
3. Terletsky-D.Mastrovasilis
Katowice rapid 2017

25...♖c2! Threatening 26...♘xg2! or 26...♖xd2!. **26.♘xc2 ♗xf2 27.♘e3 ♕xe3!** White resigned on account of 28.♗xe3 ♗xg2 mate.



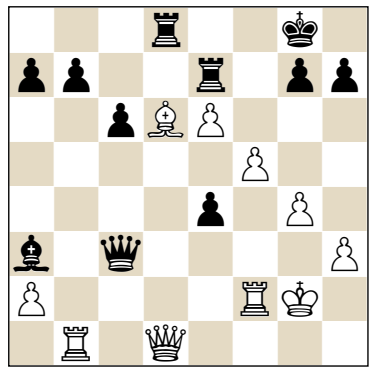
4. Duda-Korobov
Riyadh rapid 2017

17...♘d4! White gave his queen by **18.♘xe5 ♘xc2+ 19.♗xc2** and duly lost. Also after 18.♘xd4 ♘xd3+ 19.♔f1 (19.♕xd3 ♗xe4) 19...♗xe4 20.h5 (20.f3 ♘f2!) 20...♕f6 his position would have been cheerless.



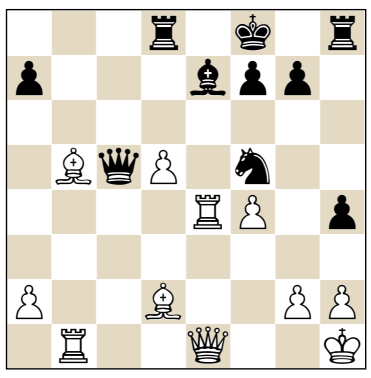
5. Motylev-Karthik
Sitges 2017

45.♖xf6! The strongest and maximally tactical move! Black resigned in view of 45...gxf6 46.♘d5 ♗a3 47.♘xf6+ ♔g7 48.♘xd7 c2 49.b4! c1♕ (or 49...♗xb4 50.♘e5 and ♘d3) 50.♗xc1 ♗xc1 51.b5 and so on.



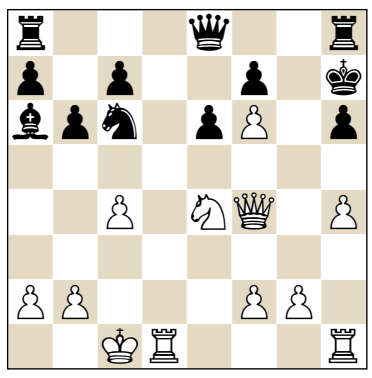
6. Ponkratov-Goganov
Khanty-Mansiysk 2017

34.♗b4! ♖xd1 35.♖xd1 Black resigned as he loses material: 35...♗xb4 36.♖d8+ ♖e8 37.♖xe8+ ♗f8 38.e7. Note that 34.♗e5? ♖xd1 35.♖xd1 ♕a5! or 34.♗xa3 ♖xd1 35.♖xd1 ♖e8 wouldn't do.



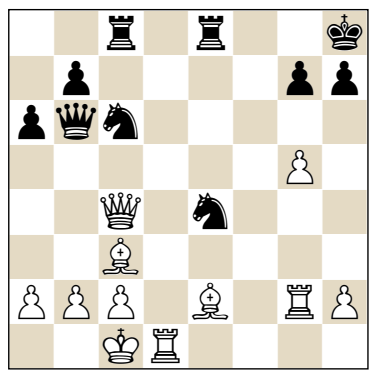
7. Baghdasaryan-Gabuzyan
Tsaghkadzor 2017

25.♗d7! ♘g3+ 25...♖xd7 26.♖b8+; or 25...g6 26.♗xf5 gxf5 27.♗b4. **26.hxg3 hxg3+ 27.♗h3 ♕xd5 28.♗b4!** Again, combining attack with defence. **28...♗xb4 29.♖bxb4 ♕xa2** 29...♖xh3+ 30.gxh3 f5 31.♖bd4. **30.♕xg3** And White won.



8. Bologan-Sai Agni
Sitges 2017

25.♘g5+! hxg5 25...♔g6 26.h5 mate or 25...♔g8 26.♕g3! ♔f8 27.♘xe6+ ♕xe6 28.♕g7+ and mate. **26.♕e4+!** 26.hxg5+? ♔g6 27.♕e4+ ♔xg5 just draws. **26...♔h6** 26...♔g8 loses to 27.hxg5. **27.♖d5!! exd5** 27...e5 28.♕f5. **28.♕f5!** Black resigned.



9. Micottis-Livaic
Tarvisio 2017

22.♗xg7+! ♔xg7 23.♖d7+ ♔h8 23...♖e7 loses the knight on e4. **24.♖xh7+! ♔xh7 25.♕f7+ ♔h8** Here, instead of 26.♕h5+? White could have won brilliantly with **26.♖g3!! ♘xg3 27.♕f6+ ♔h7 28.♕h6+ ♔g8 29.♗c4+**, mating.

Hans Ree

Living in bad times

German chess historian Michael Negele has published a biography of Paul Felix Schmidt (1916-1984), a prominent player in his time, but now almost forgotten. Written in collaboration with Schmidt's daughter Eva Regina Magacs, *Paul Felix Schmidt – A Winning Formula* is a book about chess but also about a period when Europe was shaken by revolutions and war.

I didn't know much about Paul Felix Schmidt, which might be forgiven, since his chess career, although distinguished, was not really spectacular. Partly by his own decision, but also as a result of the political upheavals through which he lived, he didn't last long enough as an active player to compete in a large number of top tournaments, preferring a career as a scientist.

I had his book *Schachmeister denken*, which was first published in Germany in 1949. It is an attempt to reconstruct the thought processes of chess masters during the game. Four voices comment on each game: the players, a critic and an analyst.

I also had the Dutch book about the tournament in Noordwijk in 1938, which doesn't treat Schmidt kindly. The tournament was won by Erich Eliskases, the Austrian who represented Germany after the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany in March 1938. Paul Keres finished second. Like Schmidt, he was still a citizen of Estonia, a country that would be occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939, by Germany in 1941, and by the Soviet Union again in 1944, only to re-emerge as an independent state in 1991. Borders and citizenships were fluid for the war-torn countries of Central and Eastern Europe. During his life, Schmidt was a citizen of Russia, Estonia, Germany and, finally, the United States.

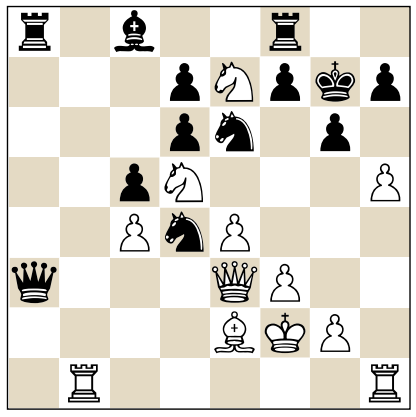
In Noordwijk, Schmidt finished last, together with Spielmann and Tartakower. In the tournament book, Hans Kmoch wrote cruelly that the Englishman Sir George Thomas played for his own pleasure, while Schmidt, Spielmann and Tartakower played for the pleasure of others. Further on in the book, Kmoch wrote: 'Schmidt caused great disappointment to the organizers of the event. The poor young man was sickly, but he also played far less strongly than had generally been assumed.' In Negele's biography, Schmidt's bad health is a recurrent theme.

A brilliancy by father and son

There was something else I knew about Schmidt: a brilliant game fragment.

In 1986, I was in London for the World Championship match between Kasparov and Karpov. On a free day I went to visit the musical *Chess*, which had opened a few months before.

At some point, I saw the following position on a big screen.



It was supposed to be from a decisive game between the Soviet defector Anatoly Sergievsky and the faithful Soviet ace Leonid Viigand. I thought: 'OK, that's easy, ♕h6+ ♔xh6 hxg6+ and mate.'

In a way I was right, but this 'and mate' proved to be far more intricate than I had envisaged. What happened on the screen was this: 1.♕h6+ (queen sacrifice) 1...♔xh6 2.hxg6+ ♔g5 3.♖h5+ (rook sacrifice) 3...♔xh5 4.f4+ ♘xe2 (and there goes a bishop) 5.♘f6+ ♔h6 6.♖h1+ ♔g7 7.♘e8+ (knight sacrifice) 7...♖xe8 8.♖xh7+ ♔f6 9.♖xf7 mate. Beautiful.

I knew that William Hartston had been the chess expert for the musical, so the next day I asked him where he had found this amazing sequence. Or had he composed it himself? He gave me a copy of an article (I think it was one of Andy Soltis' *Chess to enjoy* columns in the American magazine *Chess Life*) where it said that the position came from a game between Paul Felix Schmidt and Paul

Roderich Schmidt, played in Heidelberg in 1946. Paul Roderich, an enthusiastic amateur, was Paul Felix's father.

Negele gives this with the move 4...♕f3+, adding that the natural 4...♘xe2 is more often given. He is not quite convinced that it had really been a game between father and son Schmidt, and I must say it does look more like a composition. Anyway, they gave us a thing of beauty.

Rivalry with Keres

The statistician Jeff Sonas has positioned Schmidt as the world's #9 chess player in the period between November 1942 and August 1944. This seems too high. It may tell us more about the problematic nature of historical ratings than about Schmidt's strength. On Sonas' list of August 1940, Schmidt was #155, which seems far too low. Can a few tournaments played in wartime Germany, Austria and occupied Poland really account for such a big jump? But Schmidt could play well, that is certain.

His most impressive result was his victory in Pärnu in 1937 with 5½ out of 7, ahead of Stahlberg, Keres, Flohr and Tartakower. In addition, he held his own against Paul Keres over a long period of time. Of the 17 games between them they both won six, with five draws.

They were both born in Narva in 1916, when Estonia was still part of the Russian empire. They first played each other as youngsters in 1933, and their last game was in Salzburg 1943.

In 1936, Keres and Schmidt played a match for the Estonian championship. Schmidt had been leading 3½-½, but the final score was 3½-3½, which meant that Keres retained his title. You might say that they were equals at that time. In a private letter Keres wrote rather disparagingly about 'the big German' whom he had 'relegated to his closet'.

In 1939, at the Olympiad in Buenos Aires, they both played for the Estonian team that would finish in third place behind Germany and Poland. Keres played well. Schmidt, plagued by illness once again, played badly.

In Krakow with Frank

During the Olympiad, war broke out in Europe. Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union. After waiting in Buenos Aires for a month Schmidt rejoined his parents and sister in Germany, having received the news that they had settled there in the course of a German campaign to bring the Baltic Germans 'Heim ins Reich'. After being a Russian, a German (briefly), and an Estonian citizen, Schmidt became a German citizen again.

'In a private letter Keres wrote rather disparagingly about "the big German" who he had "relegated to his closet".'

Keres, on the other side of the divide, would play in the Soviet championships of 1940 and 1941 (the so-called Absolute Championship), while his former compatriot Schmidt played in the Greater German championships, finishing second in 1940 and first in 1941.

Then, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the two Pauls were at the same side of the front and played each other in Salzburg in 1942 and 1943.

In October 1941, Schmidt shared first place with Alekhine in a tournament played in Krakow and Warsaw. Hans Frank, the Governor-General of occupied Poland, was a lover of chess and owned a big chess library. Negele's book has a photo in which Alekhine explains a position to Frank, while Schmidt and some other German chess players are looking on.

The German historian Joachim Fest has written that Frank was slightly more civilized than the other Nazi leaders and that he really had to make an effort to behave as ruthlessly and murderously as his colleagues. At the Nuremberg trials of 1946, Frank was hanged for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Escape from Europe

Schmidt was enlisted in the German army, first as a medic, later as an interpreter, but was allowed to finish his studies in chemistry, play a few tournaments and marry Eva Louise Kohn, also a chemist.

According to a memoir he wrote, the closest he came to death was in 1943, when he had received marching orders to join a regiment deep in Ukraine, and in 1945, when he was taken prisoner by the Russians and was afraid he would be sent to Siberia. Both times he managed to extricate himself.

After the war he played some more tournaments, but not at his earlier level. His scientific career and his family life had become more important. As a chess journalist he visited The Hague in 1948 for the World Championship, meeting Paul Keres for the last time. It can't have been an intimate conversation, not just because they were not friends, but also because the Soviets would certainly not look kindly on fraternizing with the enemy.

In 1952, he managed to emigrate to the United States, afraid there would be war again in Europe, this time between the US and the Soviet Union. This fear was shared by many Europeans.

In the US, his serious chess career came practically to an end, but his scientific career prospered. Once he told his daughter Eva Regina that being a scientist was the only truly fascinating profession.

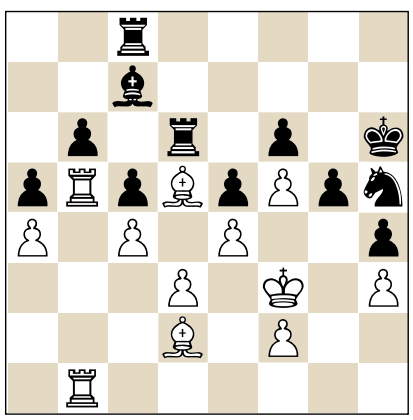
Fascinating, but not safe. Paul Schmidt died in 1984 of cancer, which according to Eva Regina had been caused by his professional work with radioactive substances. ■

Jan Timman

Mutual Benefit

Spectacular ideas in top-level games often inspire chess study composers. And the other way around! **JAN TIMMAN** looks at the recent harvest and presents the winners of the study contest for his 65th birthday.

In the final round of the Tradewise Festival in Gibraltar, a fantastic move was played in the game between Le Quang Liem and Daniil Dubov.

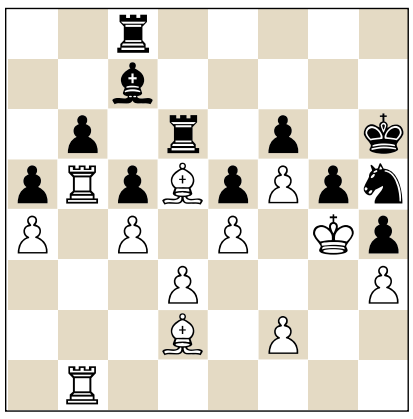


Le Quang Liem-Dubov
Gibraltar 2018 (10)
position after 43.♖b5

White is obviously better, but the position is gridlocked and there seems to be no way forward.

43...♗d8 Not suspecting anything. If Black had known what was coming, he would probably have gone for the accurate defence 43...♖h8 44.♔g4 ♔g7.

44.♔g4 ♗c7 Still convinced that nothing can happen to him. But he is in for a tremendous surprise.

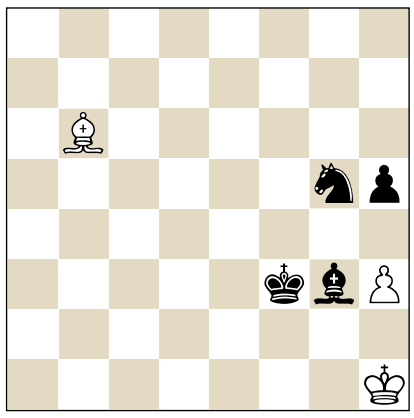


45.d4!! A spectacular pawn sac based on further breakthroughs on both wings.

45...exd4 After 45...cxd4 46.c5 bxc5 47.♖xc5 the pin along the c-file would be deadly.

46.e5 ♖dd8 47.♖xb6! And White crashes through the enemy defences. The rest was simple (1-0, 55).

If Dubov had managed to draw, he would have made the tie-breaks instead of Aronian. The chatters waxed lyrical about White's 45th move. 'The best move of the tournament' and 'study-like', they called it. The final part of the game does look study-like, but I wouldn't know how to add further study elements. I did manage to do so in a recent game between two youngsters.



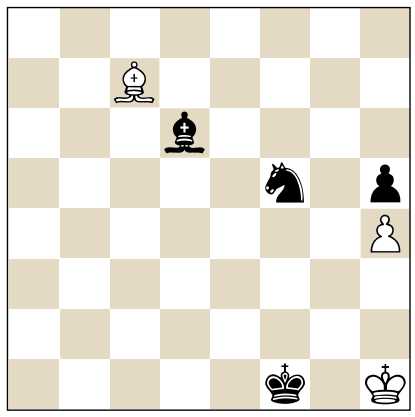
Narayanan-Gledura
Stockholm 2017/18
position after 69...♘g5

An endgame from Round 7 of the well-established Rilton Cup in Stockholm. Black is winning, but White still manages to set a few traps.

70.h4 Intending 70...♗xh4? 71.♗d8!, and it's a draw.

70...♘e4 71.♗d8 ♔f2 72.♗b6+ ♔f1 73.♗d4 ♘d6 74.♗e5 The second attempt. Black must not capture the bishop.

74...♘f5 75.♗c7 ♗d6



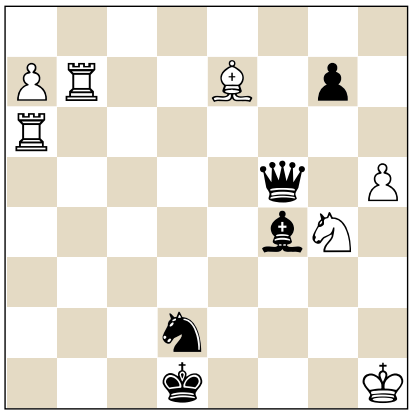
Study-like. The bishops are chasing each other along the diagonal.

76.♗b6 ♘xh4 77.♗f2 The second stalemate attempt. Black doesn't take the bishop, of course.

77...♘f5 78.♗b6 ♗e5 79.♗a7 ♗d4 80.♗b8 ♗g1 81.♗c7 ♘d4 82.♗b6 Now Black has only one winning move.

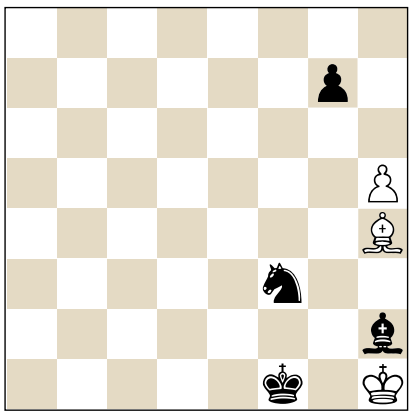
82...♘e2 Certainly not 82...♘f3? in view of 83.♗e3 or 83.♗f2, and drawn. Now everything works swimmingly.

The situation around the 82th move inspired me to compose the following study.

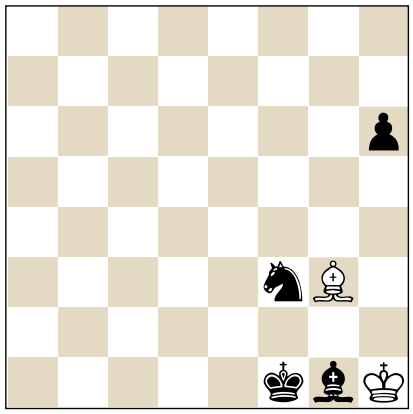


Timman 2018
Original
White to play and draw

Materially speaking, White is fine, but his king is exposed and his pieces do not coordinate very well defensively.
1.♖a1+ The rook sacrifice 1.♖b1+, intended to take control of the long diagonal after queening, is insufficient in view of 1...♕xb1 2.a8♕ ♔e2+, with a mating attack.
1...♔e2 2.♖e1+! An indispensable rook sacrifice to organize the defence.
2...♔xe1 3.♗h4+ ♔f1
3...♔d1 4.♘f2+ ♔c2 5.♖c7+! ♗xc7 6.a8♕
4.♘h2+ ♗xh2 5.♖f7! The second rook sac, aimed at controlling the long diagonal after queening.
5...♕xf7 6.a8♕ With a number of sacrifices, White has weathered the attack and is now even threatening mate in one. Black is forced to swap the queens.
6...♕f3+ 7.♕xf3+ ♘xf3

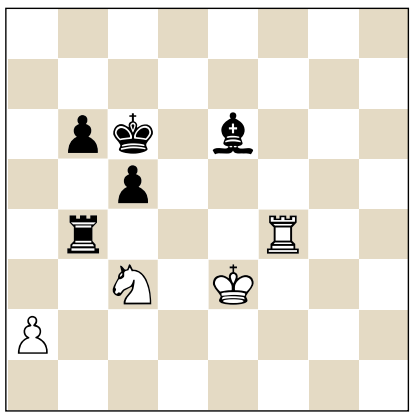


8.h6! An important intermediate move. Black is forced to take the pawn.
8...gxh6 9.♗g3! Narayanan-Gledura is becoming visible. Black has only one square for his bishop.
9...♗g1



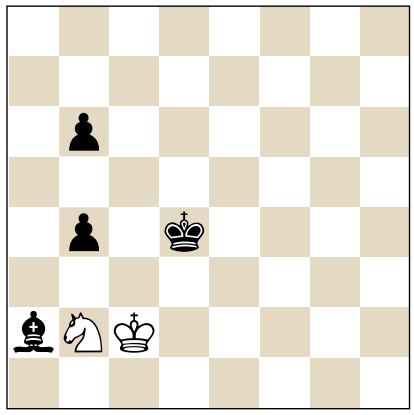
10.♗f2! The second bishop sacrifice.
10...h5 11.♗e3! Keeping the black bishop cooped up. 11.♗d4? ♗h2 would allow it to escape.
11...♗h2 After 11...h4 both 12.♗d4 and 12.♗f2 would be sufficient.
12.♗f4! And Black can make no further progress.

Last year, I was awarded first honourable mention for a game-based study in the Dvoretsky Memorial.



Damaso-Navara
Jerusalem 2015
position after 57...♔c6

It was this endgame from the first round of the European Championship that inspired me.
58.♖xb4 There's nothing inherently wrong with this swap, since the minor-piece ending will still be drawn, although it will require far more accurate play than one would expect. The alternative was 58.♖f6, after which Black will have at best some practical chances.
58...cxb4 59.♘d1 ♔b5 Navara does not take the a-pawn at once, wanting to penetrate with his king via a4.
60.♘b2 Preventing this plan.
60...♗xa2 61.♔d2 ♔c5 62.♔c2 ♔d4 The critical position. The unfortunately positioned knight is forced to make a move.

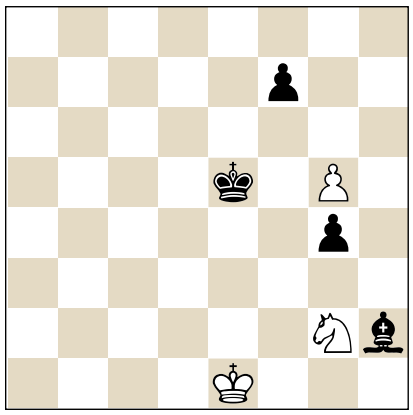


63.♘d1? You cannot blame Damaso for missing the hidden draw. Correct was 63.♘a4 b5 64.♘b6 ♗e6 65.♘a8!!, and the white knight is redeployed via c7, after which it cannot be dominated.
63...♗e6! But now it is. It is deprived of squares g4 and h3.
64.♘f2 ♔e3 65.♘d1+ ♔e2 66.♘b2 The knight is back.
66...b5! And White's wiggle room is further restricted. The rest was not difficult (0-1, 74).

In a rook vs knight ending, the squares b2, b7, g2 and g7 are taboo for the knight. In this endgame, those squares near the corners were also very bad. I wondered if I would

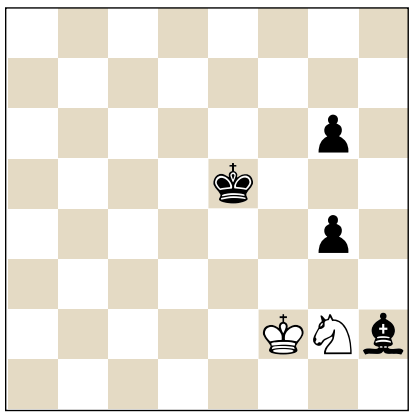
'With a number of sacrifices, White has weathered the attack and is now even threatening mate in one.'

be able to conceive of a position that would allow for two variations: one in which the knight would go to one corner square, and one in which it would go the corner square at the other end of the long diagonal. This yielded the following result.



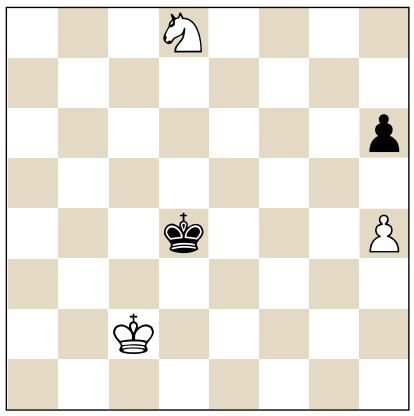
Timman 2017
White to play and draw

The scene of the action has moved to the kingside. The first thing White must do is sacrifice his weak g-pawn.
1.g6! After 1.♔f2 ♔f5 Black would win easily.
1...fxg6 2.♔f2 Not 2.♘e3 ♔f4, and the white king is no longer involved. Black now has two possibilities.



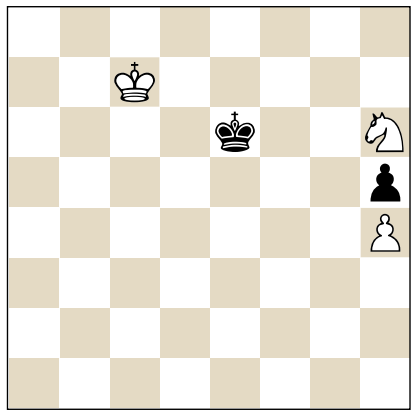
Variation A – 2...♔e4 3.♘h4!
Exactly as in Damaso-Navara. After 3.♘e1? ♗d6! White would lose.
3...g5 4.♘g6 ♗d6 5.♘h8!! ♔f5 6.♘f7 The knight is safe.
6...♗c7 7.♘h6+
Variation B – 2...♗f4 3.♘e1! And certainly not 3.♘h4? in view of 3...g5! 4.♘g6+ ♔f6! 5.♘f8 ♗d6 6.♘d7+ ♔e6, and the knight is shut in. After 7.♘b6 ♗c5+ it will be lost.
3...♔e4 4.♘c2 ♗d6 5.♘a1!! The saving corner square, at the other end of the long diagonal.
5...♔d3 6.♘b3 ♔c3 and now both 7.♘c1 and 7.♘a5 are sufficient.

Sometimes you see a practical endgame, and only then find a corresponding study. It is the reversed process: the study is there first, and then comes the example from practical play. In New In Chess 2017/7, I reported on the endgame L'Ami-Tarjan from the chess.com Isle of Man International, in which White missed a study-like win. Later I found the following study.



Kondratev / Kopnin / Popkov
Ceskoslovensky Sach 1984
White to play and win

It looks as if White has no winning chances in view of the dominant position of the black king. But by hiding his knight, he eventually manages to claim victory.
1.♘f7! h5 The only move. After 1...♔e4 2.♘xh6 ♔f4 3.♔d3 ♔g3 4.♘f5+ ♔g4 5.♔e4 Black's position would be hopeless.
2.♘h6!! Not exactly obvious. This knight move is nicely in line with my study, except that it must not go to the corner, because 2.♘h8? ♔e5 would be a draw.
2...♔e4 3.♔c3! ♔e3 The alternative 3...♔f4 would speed up the win: 4.♔d4 ♔g3 5.♘f5+ ♔f4 6.♘e7! ♔g4 7.♘g6 ♔f5 8.♘e5 ♔f4 9.♔d5 ♔f5 10.♔d6 ♔f6, and now White takes the knight to g2 via c4, d3 or f3.
4.♔c4 ♔e4 5.♔c5 ♔e5 6.♔c6 ♔e6 7.♔c7! In the end, the black king is dominated by the teamwork of White's king and knight.



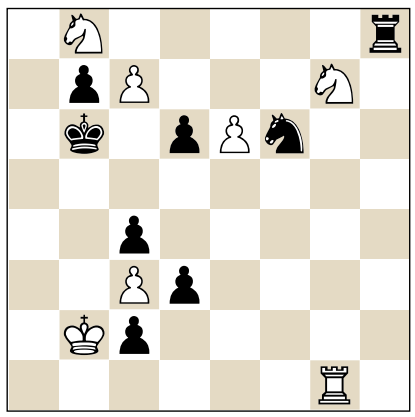
7...♔f6! The best try. After 7...♔e7 8.♘f5+ ♔f6 9.♘g3 everything becomes clear at once.
8.♔d6! ♔g6 9.♘g8 Now the knight has a long road before it.
9...♔f5 10.♘e7+ ♔g4 11.♘g6 ♔f5 12.♘e5 ♔f6 And now White returns his knight to g2, again via three squares.

Birthday study tournament

In late 2016, my old friend Hans Böhm decided to organize and sponsor a study tournament to honour my 65th birthday. There was another reason: we had been close friends for half a century. In our youth, we often travelled the world together, sometimes to play open tournaments, sometimes for no specific reason. Hans has always loved endgame studies. The tournament consisted of two sections.

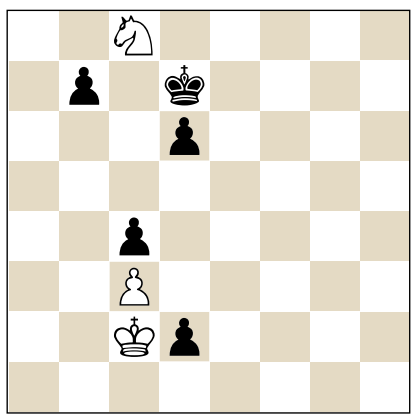
Section One was open to all titled players (including Candidate Masters), and was adjudicated by Hans, together with study grandmaster Yochanan Afek. The idea was to bring the endgame study closer to the practical player. This section was won by Geir Østmoe, a Norwegian IM with a 2461 rating. He is known for the ingenious ideas in his studies. This time, he had managed to include a 'mutual Prokes' in a personal homage to me. In *The Art of the Endgame* I write about the 'Double Prokes', an old idea of Tim Krabbé's. And what is a 'Prokes', or 'Prokes

manoeuvre'? It's a rook sacrifice to defeat two connected passed pawns poised to queen. Here is Østmoe's study, together with Afek's comments in the jury report.



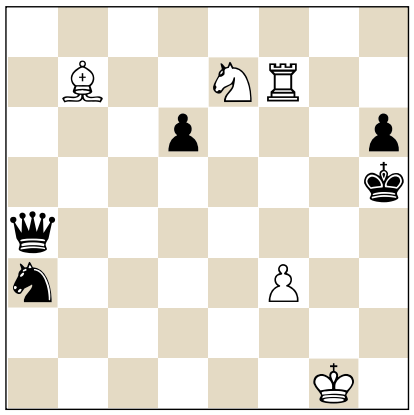
Østmoe
1st prize Timman-65 JT 2017 (1)
White to play and win

1.♘d7+ ♘xd7 2.♘e8!
2.e7? ♔xc7 3.e8♕ ♖xe8 4.♘xe8+ ♔c6 and Black has enough counterplay with ...♘c5 coming up. For example: 5.♖g6 ♘c5 6.♘xd6 ♘b3 7.♘f5+ ♔c5 8.♖g1 c1♕+ 9.♖xc1 ♘xc1 10.♔xc1 b5 draws.
2...♖xe8 3.exd7 ♖e1! 4.c8♘+!
4.♖xe1? ♔xc7 5.♖e7 ♔d8 6.♖h7 b5 7.♔c1 ♔c7 8.♔d2 ♔d8 draws. White's king must stay close to Black's passed pawns, and the rook alone cannot do more than exchange b5 for d7: 9.♔c1 ♔c7 10.d8♕+ ♔xd8 11.♖b7 ♔c8 12.♖xb5 ♔c7 13.♖b4 d5, and White can make no progress
4...♔c7 5.♖xe1 d2 6.d8♕+! ♔xd8 7.♖e8+! ♔xe8 8.♔xc2 ♔d7



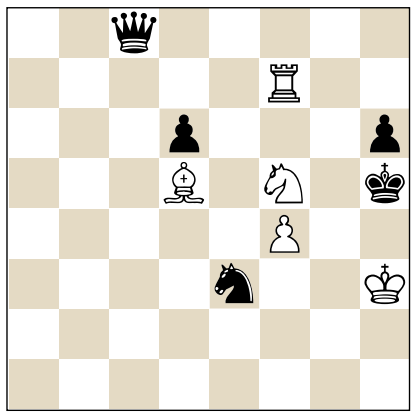
9.♘a7! The c4-pawn is poisoned: 9.♘b6+? ♔c6 10.♘xc4 d1♕+! 11.♔xd1 ♔c5 draws. Black follows up with ...b5 or ...d5 and will be able to exchange White's last pawn. For example: 12.♘a3 (12.♘b2 d5! 13.♔c2 d4 14.c4 b5 draws) 12...b5 13.♘c2 ♔c4 14.♔d2 d5 15.♘e3+ ♔c5 16.♔d3 b4 draws.
9...♔c7 10.♘b5+ ♔c6 11.♘a3
11.♘d4+? ♔d5 12.♔xd2 ♔e4 leaves Black too active, for example: 13.♘b5 d5 14.♘d6+ ♔e5 15.♘xb7 d4 draws.
11...b5
11...♔c5, e.g. 12.♔xd2 ♔d5 13.♔e3 ♔c5 14.♘c2 ♔d5 15.♘b4+ ♔e5 16.♔f3 ♔f5 17.♘d5 ♔e5 18.♘b6 d5 19.♔e3 wins.
12.♔xd2 ♔c5 13.♘c2 and wins, e.g. 13...♔d5 14.♔c1 ♔e4 (14...♔c5 15.♔b2 ♔d5 16.♔a3 ♔c5 17.♘e3 d5 18.♘c2 ♔c6 19.♔b4 ♔b6 20.♘d4) 15.♘a3! ♔d3 16.♘xb5.

Section Two had a theme: mate by the bishop (with studies in which this mate was prevented also accepted). I had come up with the theme myself, mainly because I had recently done quite a few studies ending in such a mate. I was curious to see what other people would do with it. Tournament director Harold van der Heijden received 77 studies for this section, more than twice as many as for Section One. Experienced composers are more easily prodded into action than practical players. Hans and myself adjudicated. We quickly determined that one study stuck out. It was composed by three kingpins from the endgame-study world. I will present it to you here, together with my own comments from the jury report.



Gurgenidze / Minski / Nielsen
1st prize Timman-65 JT 2017 (2)
White to play and win

1.♔g2! A quiet move as key. White takes away future squares for the black king and threatens mate. Insufficient was 1.♔h2? ♕h4+ 2.♔g2 ♕g5+ 3.♔h3 ♕h4+ 4.♔g2 ♕g5+=.
1...♕e8! The only defence. Black has to protect square g6. If 1...♕c4 then 2.♖f5+ ♔h4 3.♘g6 mate.
2.♗d5 Protecting the rook and keeping up the pressure against the black king.
2...♘c2 3.♔h3! Again a quiet king move. Insufficient were 3.♖f5+? ♔h4 4.♖f4+ ♔g5= or 3.♔g3? ♘d4!= and 3.f4? ♔h4!=.
3...♘e3 Black has to bring his knight closer to the battlefield. If 3...♘d4 then 4.f4 ♕d7+ 5.♖f5+! (5.♘f5? ♕b5! 6.♖f6 ♕f1+ 7.♗g2 ♕xf4=) 5...♕xf5+ 6.♘xf5 ♘xf5 7.♗f7 mate.
4.f4 Taking another square away from the black king.
4...♕d7+ Not 4...♘xd5 5.♖f5 mate.
5.♘f5! Only this way! If 5.♖f5+? ♕xf5+ 6.♘xf5 ♘xd5!= (6...♘xf5? 7.♗f7 mate).
5...♕c8! Keeping the knight in the pin. If 5...♕b5 then 6.♘xe3 ♕e2 7.♖e7, winning.



6.♖f6! Threatening mate.
6...♕xf5+ Otherwise it is mate in one: 6...♘xf5 7.♗f7 mate /♗f3 mate.
7.♖xf5+ ♔g6! 8.♖h5!! An incredible denouement. Nothing is offered by 8.♖f8? ♘xd5=.
8...♔xh5 9.♗f7 A model mate by the bishop.
An impressive study. In a game-like set-up, White plays quiet little moves to gradually improve his position. He keeps on taking squares from the black king, and in doing so weaves a mating net around it. The final rook sacrifice is absolutely stunning. ■

Just Checking

Pia Cramling

CURRENT ELO: 2449

DATE OF BIRTH: April 23, 1963

PLACE OF BIRTH: Vantör, Stockholm, Sweden

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Stockholm, Sweden

What is your favourite city?
My home-town, Stockholm.

What was the last great meal you had?
The gala dinner in Gibraltar this year. The food and wine were less important. I would have been very happy regardless.

What drink brings a smile to your face?
Green tea. I cannot live without it.

Which book would you give to a friend?
The Alchemist by Paolo Coelho.

What book is currently on your bedside table?
Nanda. Leif Svensson, a Swedish chess player and former organizer, tells the life story of his grandmother Nanda.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Ben Hur, but I always cry in the end.

And your favourite TV series?
I only watch them with my daughter and of those she chooses I prefer *Riverdale*.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Rowan Atkinson or my husband Juan, who actually is very talented.

And a favourite actress?
Carmen Maura.

What music are you currently listening to?
Swedish pop music.

Is there a work of art that moves you?
The sculpture *My Heart in the World* in Stockholm symbolizes peace and freedom.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
My brother was my first hero. I did everything he did and followed him to the chess club. Second came the fighter Viktor Kortchnoi. But of course, Juan has meant more to me than anyone else.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
The Penguin Book of Chess Positions that I had on my bedside table as a teenager and Simon Webb's *Chess for Tigers*.

What was your best result ever?
Plus-3 in the match Veterans vs. Ladies in Prague 1995. Beating legends like Portisch, Smyslov and Kortchnoi was a dream.

And the best game you ever played?
Most memorable was my first game with Kortchnoi in Lloyds Bank 1982. He was rated 400 Elo points higher than me. I could have won, but it was a draw.

What was the most exciting chess game you have ever seen?
Every time my daughter gets into time-trouble. I hardly dare to watch then.

What is your favourite square?
c4 – it used to be my opening, and a knight on c4 can be very powerful.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
I used to, but now I realize that it does not matter which pen I use, although I cannot do without my Lypsyl lip balm.

Who do you follow on Twitter?
Mostly chess people, but also, for example, Barack Obama.

What is your life motto?
Treat others the way you like them to treat you.

When were you happiest?
When I became a mother. I never imagined that it was so beautiful until it happened.

When was the last time you cried?
Cannot have been long ago. I am very emotional and laugh and cry a lot.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
I would love to be a Master in Yoga.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
The Norwegian hotel mogul Petter Stordalen, Swedish comedian and TV presenter Petra Mede and Bill Gates.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?
Remember the past and plan your future but live in the moment and do it in such a way that tomorrow you can look back with a smile.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
To play an instrument or sing well. Or to stand on my head.

And your greatest regret?
The time I did not spend with my mother.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
That many more women play chess. Actually, it is what I miss most when I play in my own country, Sweden, where there are fewer female players than in almost any other place.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'It is not enough to be a good player; you must also play well.' – Tarrasch.

‘There is something about nearly every opening one can think of.’

– *British Chess Magazine*

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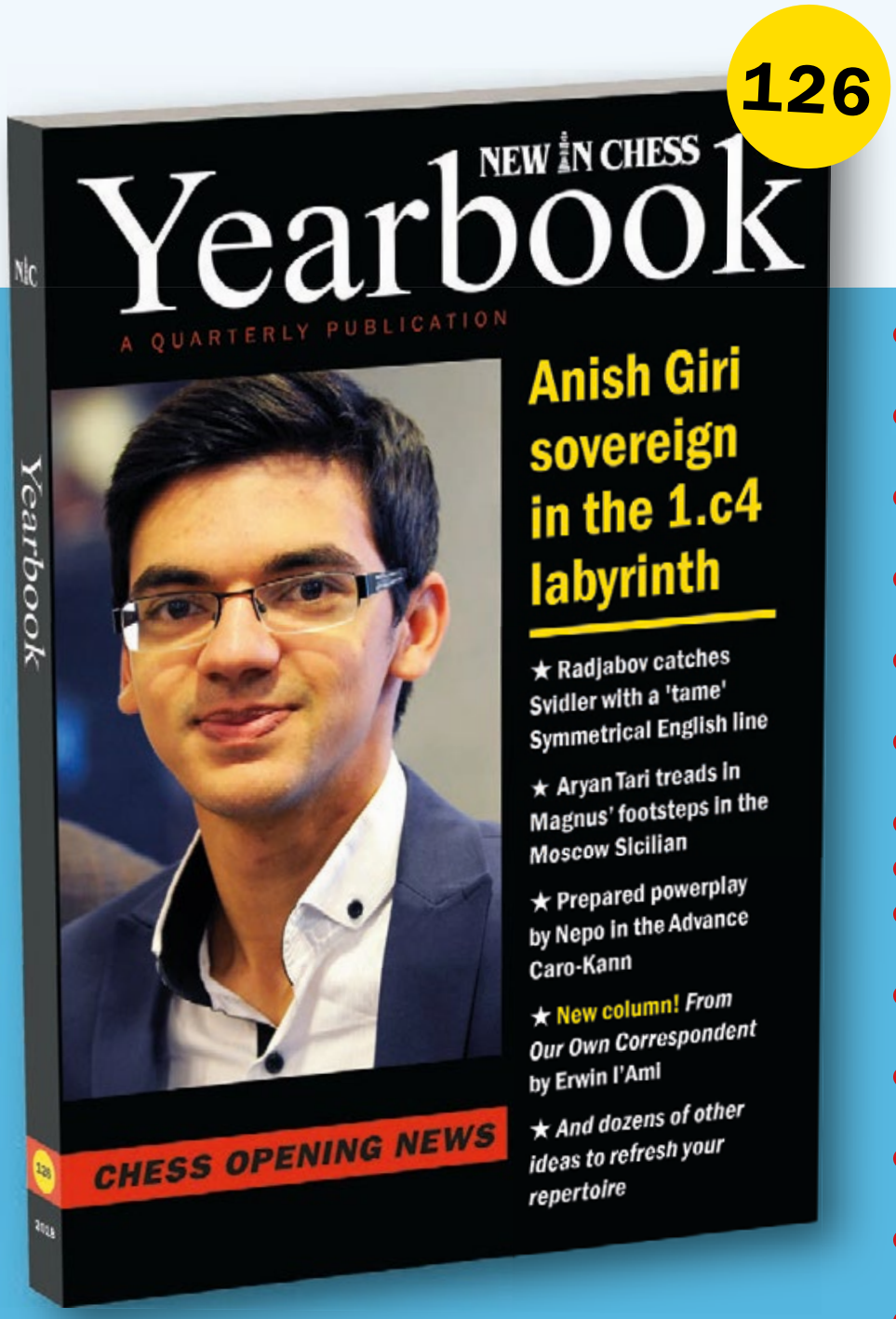
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